



Alboin
by Archer Gurney
1844

Alboin
A
Play
In
5 Acts
by
Archer
Gurney
(1844)
with an introduction by
David Gurney

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Portrait of Archer Gurney (1820-1887) by Daffinger.

To be performed at
the Theatre Royal
Edinburgh.

Alboin

a
Play
in
5 Acts.

Michael Gurnee.

73 St. Michael Street
Blandford 1794

The title page of *Alboin* (British Library Add MS 42994 (7))

Get leave the end! - 236

Other.
Alboin. In all is boasting most ungracious, Friends,
And, most of all, in youth; such youth as mine,
That hath been dull and lifeless. - Still, I boast -
And oh! forgive the heart that breaks all fetters,
That glads although my better reason chide! -
I boast at least my love for my dear Country;
I boast my heart to work her foes away. -

Paul Vokes. Still noble, oh, most noble!
Lord (confusedly, but loudly) Live the King! -
Alboin (to his friend) Weakness commends its feelings to your hearts
For lack of deeds. -
Glendower & Other. Ay! - Let him speak! - Poor dreamer! -

Alboin. - Little of arms know I: - But this, good Friends,
Is my misfortune, not my crime. I shall trust,
That though in sooth not nurtured in war's pastimes,
My heart may still as warmly beat to conquer
Loved Sweden's Foes, nay, even perchance, in time,
My arm be all as firmly braced to slay them,
As had my youth in knightly sports been fashioned,
Or hardened in the lusty school of war. -

Nobles. Live Alboin! -
Alboin. Now & more pressing matter! -
I know that we have Foes. Nay more, this knowledge
Hath led me to abandon monkish rest,
And take this post of danger, as of love. -
I know too, or at least have heard, yet scarce
Such tale could credit, that amongst those Nobles,
Who should be Wardens of our Native Land,
Are some, who with its downfall, the world see

A sample page of the manuscript of *Alboin* in Archer Gurney's hand

(British Library Add MS 42994 (7))

INTRODUCTION

by David Gurney

The life of Revd Archer Thompson Gurney (1820-1887), Priest, Poet and the author of *Alboin* was documented at some length in a *Memoir* written in 1887 by his brother Augustus William Gurney (British Library Add. Ms 81597 and transcripts Add. 81598 A, B). This covered the years 1820 to 1855. The *Memoir* has recently been published in full, along with an account of Archer Gurney's life between 1855 and 1887 (Gurney 2025). *Alboin* is not mentioned in the *Memoir* although Augustus was probably aware of it as he was with his brother in 1846 (see below). Perhaps by 1887 when the *Memoir* was written he had forgotten it or, more likely, Archer's original manuscript may not have survived; Augustus tells us that many of Archer's works were deliberately destroyed, and no doubt *Alboin* only survives by chance today as it was included amongst plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing in 1846 (British Library Add MS 42994 (7), ff. 208-251b). A transcript of *Alboin* is also now in the British Library (Pamphlets collection 4653).

While many Victorian clerics had fairly routine lives, Archer Gurney's was far from pedestrian. After his childhood in Cornwall the family spent ten years on the continent. Back in England Archer trained as a barrister, stood for parliament and was ordained. He worked amongst the poor in Soho, spent twelve years as a chaplain in Paris and then held a series of curacies in England and Wales.

Throughout his life Archer wrote prolifically and the *Memoir* includes many extracts from his published and unpublished poetry and dramas. He also corresponded or had encounters with prominent literary figures of the day including Wordsworth, Tennyson, the Austrian poet Grillparzer, Matthew Arnold, Charles Kingsley and Charles Dickens.

In 1843, Archer's father Richard had died in Bonn after which the family returned to England. Here the Oxford Movement was in full swing, and Archer 'threw himself ardently into that movement'.

In the spring of 1844, the family were living in 'Rock Vale', "a thatched and verandah'd cottage in the parish of Stoke Fleming, some two miles out of Dartmouth." This location seems to have been ideal for Archer's writing, and as well as *Alboin* he wrote countless poems and magazine or review articles, *Love's Legends* and, in 1845--6, *Charles the First*.

Alboin was first written in London between 12 and 20 February 1844. It was rewritten in March or April of the same year and again at Rock Vale on 24 and 25 September. The copy submitted for licensing was dated 5 May 1846 (British Library Add MS 42994, and see also listings in Add MS 71564 and 71565).

In the index to the volume which includes *Alboin* the play is described as a tragedy, but that term is not used by Archer and given the positive conclusion of the work it does not appear to be appropriate.

The volume contains 16 plays, mostly in English but some in French. The attribution of a play to its author is uncommon; Archer Gurney is one of the few playwrights mentioned by name. Some were submitted by, for example, the lessee of a theatre.

Compared to many of the plays within the volume, some of which are printed, the text of *Alboin* is one of the most difficult to read. There are overwritten words, changes and many deletions, including individual words and large sections of text. These may represent misreadings of the original or changes to the text by the author during the preparation of the copy to be submitted for licensing. While some of deleted words can be read, many are not and are therefore marked as [illegible] in the transcription.

Each page measure 8" by 9½" and has been pasted into the volume along its inner edge. Folios 208-215 are written on one side, whereas folios 216-251 are written on both sides. Each folio is annotated with a number in pencil, top right; these are the volume page numbers. In addition, a second set of numbers in pencil starting with '1' on folio 211 (Act 1, Scene 1st) and running to '76' appear to be Archer's page numbers. All these numbers have been included in the transcription.

On 11 April 1846 it appears to have been granted a licence for performance without alteration (British Library Add MS 53702). It was intended to be staged at The Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, but there is no evidence of it being performed there or indeed anywhere else.

Key factors that might have influenced Gurney's choice of theme include the revival of interest in medieval history at the time, a general interest in the historical roots of European nations, the dramatic potential of turbulent thirteenth-century Swedish politics and nineteenth-century interest in the universal themes of morality, chivalry, and power. The play appears to be entirely fictional and not based on any historical characters or events.

The names of the three principal characters, Alboin, Asta and Osric, are not unknown, but most of the other names are probably Archer's inventions or gleaned from obscure sources. The name Alboin originates from Old German, means noble or bright friend and is associated with nobility, loyalty and strength. Asta is a name of Scandinavian origin, including Swedish, and is a diminutive of Astrid, a name derived from Old Norse meaning "love" or "divine love" with connotations of loyalty, beauty, and affection. Osric is a character in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where he is portrayed as ambitious and superficial, representing the corruption of the Danish court.

The play takes place in fourteenth-century Sweden in the course of a single day.

Alboin, a member of the Swedish royal family, was orphaned as a child and brought up by his nurse alongside her own daughter Asta. Alboin is fourth in line to the throne and about to take monastic vows until the sudden and unexpected deaths or murders of his uncle the king and two cousins leaves him first in line. He is also, like Archer Gurney, an aspiring poet.

Meanwhile, the warrior lord Osric, a Swedish noble, seems to have links with or allies in Denmark and Norway and, supported by other nobles, is hatching a plan to seize the throne. This does seem to have some basis in historical facts in that in fourteenth-century Sweden nobles frequently challenged royal power and in some instances attempted to replace weak monarchs. Osric is also set on killing Alboin and taking Asta as his mistress, against her will. The relationship between the royal Alboin and the commoner Asta, initially presented as a platonic love between

siblings, is clearly much deeper than that, and they are resolved to marry despite the consequences for the monarchy.

At first Alboin is seen as a “monkish dreamer” who, as monarch, would abolish vassalage and marry the peasant girl Asta. In contrast, Osric’s plans are to remove the right of appeal to the Crown by bondmen, thereby giving the nobles unrestrained power over them. The monarch and heads of state would all be appointed by the nobles.

Mindful of all these difficulties, Asta pretends that she does not love Alboin. Alboin demands to meet Osric in combat and we learn, unexpectedly, that he is skilled in the art of combat after all. Alboin disarms Osric whose right arm is seriously wounded, thereby ending the combat. Osric recognises Alboin as king but is nevertheless to be put to death for the murder of Alboin’s two royal cousins. Alboin’s first act is to abolish all unwilling servitude and, recognising the abolition of vassalage, the nobles urge Alboin to wed Asta. Thus good and love triumph over evil.

Bibliography

Gurney, D., 2025 A Remarkable Clerical Career. The Life of Archer Gurney, Priest and Poet (1820-1887) (Market Harborough)(eISBN 9781836289326). Also available at <https://archive.org/details/a-remarkable-clerical-career.-the-life-of-archer-gurney-priest-and-poet-1820-to-188>

June 2026

To be performed at
the Theatre Royal
Edinburgh

Alboin
a
Play
In
5 Acts

by
Archer Gurney.

13A Sherborne St
Blandford Square

First written in Feb^{ry} 1844 – at London
 Then begun on Monday, the 12th of Feb^{ry}
 Ended on Tuesday, the 20th – do –

Rewritten, with the exception of part of the first act copied
 in March or April 1844, on Wednesday and Thursday,
 the 24th and 25th of September 1845 – at Rock Vale.

5/5/46

Alboin
 a
 Play
 In
 5 Acts
 by
 Archer Gurney.

To be performed at
 the Theatre Royal Edinburgh
 1846

Mr Gurney's Address is
 13A Sherborne Street
 Blandford Square

(but not at ^{the} present moment) Rock Vale, near Dartmouth, Devon.

Dramates PersonaAlboin.Osric of Gurilliedstern, Pretendant to the throne of Sweden.[illegible] of Gurilliedstern, [illegible]Jarl Holkar.Owain Tostedt, aRoss Tostedt, his sonSuraborg, Chancellor.Prior HeribertFaroer) Nobles and Partisans of Osric Degebert.) Other Lords.Oglendstern) Elmhult.)Ingelbrau,)Wünibald,) Citizens of StockholmLeofric,)Alfgar,)Nobles, Citizens, Soldiers, Monks &c.Asta. _____Lady Casilda, daughter of Suraborg.Ladies of the Court, Maidens &c.

Scene, Sweden, Stockholm and its vicinity.

Time about the 14th Century.

The action of the piece occupies 24 hours.

Act 1st.Scene 1st.

(Cloisters of the Monastery of St Emeran in the vicinity of Stokholm).

(Time – Morning. – Prior Heribert and Osric of Gurilliedstern in converse).

Osric. I tell thee, Prior, it lies within his grasp!
A Crown! – Dost feel the import of that word?
That little word? And are thou sure indeed
He will not strive to gain it?

Prior. Sure, my Lord. –
The youth is sunk in holy meditations
And saintlike reveries; lives in these alone,
And has no wish, no thought, for pomp or power. –
Nay, doubt it not! Although in years so young,
He is in deeds a very anchorite.
Thou knows't that by his uncle, Siward's orders
He was borne hither yet a child, and, since
That hour, but rarely from these walls hath issued.
Here, by his uncle's own desire at first,
Since then, both for thy good and mine, I strove
To teach him, self negation and retirement
Were surest means to gain the smiles of Heaven,
And filled his soul with horror of all pleasures
So that he dreads these halls of peace to leave.

Osric. ~~Of peace!~~ – Nay, cant not, friends, to me. But ^{tell me}, had'st thou
An easy task in this?

Prior. Not so. The youth
Was full of high desires and ardent instincts,
Which bad him covet fame as life's first prize.
But then, the goal achieved was worth the pains

212 (2)

Required to gain it. – When our plans were laid
For placing thee on Sweden's throne, and doomed
Were Siward and his sons, still Alboin
Stood 'twixt thee and the throne. He stands no more. –
Tomorrow will he take those sacred vows
Which bind him over for ever: and of late
By self inflicted penance he hath striven
To arm his soul –

Osric. Enough! Is this the rival
My fancied rival, to proud Sweden's throne? –
The better, faith, for him! – For ruled his being
The martial spirit of his sires, and strove he
To bear the crown of empire, soon, right soon,
Would I, though singly, tear it from his brow,
And hurl him to perdition. – Heribert!

Thou know'st me well: ay, from a child hast known me;
Thou know'st the stakes for which my life I play:
Tis Royal Power! – Oh God! The fierce delight
Of lording it o'er all who meet or cross me;
Of ruling all men's wills, and beating down
Fierce opposition by my sovereign sway;
Of standing on my pinnacle sublime
Above a nation crouching in the dust,
And feeling, – ay, tis there the rapture lies, –
By my own strength I mounted. – Yes, this only
Hath been my goal for years; and now I reach it.

Prior.

Ay, but the means? –

Osric.

The means? – Why, they were murder,
Murder of Kings!

213 (3)

Prior.

Speak low!

Osric.

Nay, do not start!

Tw'as thou first arriv'dst at this, in crafty speech,
Which woke an echo here. And what with thee,
Was but a thought, with me became a deed,
Whence both shall reap due benefit. Thy share
Increase of revenue and ghostly power,
And more, ~~deep vengeance~~ old rancour glutted: and my need,
A crown, a golden crown, the crown of Sweden! –
But now that we have plunged thus deep in crime,
Shall it be possible for this light youth
To balk us even a moment? – On this day,
The Deputation hitherward intends
To hasten, – I myself must join its train, –
And proffer Sweden's crown to this young dreamer.
But thought I he could dare to grasp it, tempted
By proud desire for sway, thought I 'twere possible
He should abandon his most dull vocation
At the last hour, and pant for power and freedom,
Then, as thou know'st, the members of this train
Are, for the most part, mine: and now, even yet,
I could from this their purpose stay them, could
Constrain their quick return to Stockholm, there
To hail me Sovereign Lord: at thus at once
Could reach the goal I long for. – Prior! What say'st thou?

Prior.

I cannot counsel such a step as this.
Our laws demand the offer of the crown;
And thou would'st harm thy cause should'st thou thus slight them?
But oh! Once more I tell thee, tis not possible,
This dreaming awestruck youth should wake to action
And leave his cell to combat for a throne. –

Osric.

Art sure, he loves not? – Rarely, said'st thou, hath

214 (4)

He left these walls; but once might chance suffice –
He dreamed not now a Crown's within his grasp,

And thence half yields to fate. But when he heard
A single word may gain him sovereign sway,
Then will Love prove a moving spirit perilous
If ere his heart it reached. Doth he not love?

Prior. My Lord, an idle thought! – Twice, if I err not,
Since first he entered here, hath he gone forth;
And then to greet his foster-sister only,
Who lay in fever's pangs.

Osric. And when chanced this?

Prior. Perchance a year ago.

Osric. Is she not fair? –

Prior. My Lord, she is his sister. – Thus at least
Doth he alone regard her. – When his mother
Died as she gave him birth, (his sire had fallen
In fight but two short moons before) his nurse,
Even that mother's loved attendant, bore him
To her own home; where, with her infant daughter
Born at no distant date, she nursed the child.
Scarce was it known he lived: till Monarch Siward
Learning the tale, entrusted him to me,
And bad me rear him for Heaven's sacred service.
But, for this maid, – tis true, he loves her dearly,
Yet, and I doubt not, with a brother's love. –
Still remarked I that his visits to her house
Perturbed his spirit, roused it from its slumbers,
And called it back to earth again. And therefore,
The fever's crisis past, I charged him strictly
To quit these halls no more. – Since then, Lord Osric
A year hath passed away; and now, I doubt not

215 (5)

He thinks not on this Asta. –

Osric. (starting) Asta? – Ha! –

Where lives she? Know'st thou?

In her uncle's dwelling.

Prior. At Stockholm. Owain Tostedt's.

Osric. Heaven and earth!

(hastily) Prior, she is fairest of all Sweden's daughters. –
I have seen the maid. – Art sure ^{art sure} he loves ~~her~~ not? –

Prior. Sure am I, if even once he thought of love,
That now Religion hath engulfed his being
And made him all her own. He speaks, nor smiles,
Nor lists when others converse; but appears
The inmate of a secret inward world,
The world of thought, which walls its author round,
And hides him as a ~~bright~~ pearl ^{within} its cell. –
Be guided then by me, and check not thou
This train's approach! Ha! Look! Even there he comes:
Lost as thou see'st in sombre reveries,
His eyes full firmly bent on earth, his arms
Closed o'er his breast, his soul a sleeping thing.

Even like a some mound, pent round by shoals of ice,
And buried. – Stand thou by, and list our converse.

(Enter Alboin R. He advances slowly and without remarking the Presence of either the Prior or Osric, the latter of whom retires to the background. Alboin is habited and a novice about to take the vows. Slowly passing across the foreground, he is ~~about to~~ depart again through the entrance on the left when the Prior speaks.)

Prior. Whence com'st thou, Alboin? And whither stray'st?

Alboin. (who has started momentarily at the sound of the Prior's voice)

I go but to my cell, and erst have left
The Convent chapel.

216 (6)

Prior. Hast thou prayed my son
Before the Martyr's shrine?

Alboin. I have done penance.

Prior. And for what deed?

Alboin. No deeds, most reverend father,
But thoughts might lead to deeds; thoughts of the world
And all its vanities. –

Prior. What vanities,
Dear son? Desires for power or glory?

Alboin. – Not
For power at least; and if for glory, then
For a most peaceful one. – Thou know'st, my father,
That I have loved in childhood's hours to cower
The strains of bards no more, and oft have striven
To emulate their music. – Tis in vain,
An idle wish, I know it; yet this wish
I felt, and may not hide. I have desired
To see my name enrolled on fame's high list,
Amongst these votaries of the lyre; to win
A name eternal, that should perish not
When past my frame away. But now these thoughts
Grow sinful in one vowed to Heaven's high service,
Shown but in humble prayer: and for that fancy
Have I done penance erst. – Was it well done?

Prior. Right well my son. The strains of which thou speakest,
Were sinful oft, and aye profane.

Alboin. But still
How beautiful! O glorious songs of old!
Still when I think of ye, ye rouse my spirit
To life perchance too buoyant. – O proud tale

217 (7)

Of Troy and Grecian heroes! – Ancient Homer!
Thou art not dead: for thou hast lived in me. –
Even when I bent above thy martial page,
I seemed to converse with thee, nay, at times,
Thou, mystic bard, and thou, more plaintive Ovid,
Ye all, immortal spirits, – glorious ones! –
Ye were my stars of childhood; whom I learnt

To love, to cherish, and my friends and guardians;
Ye were the lonely orphan's counsellor. –
And was it wondrous, that the soul which loved ye,
Should strive in time to emulate your fame,
And echo your sweet accents? – Oh, my father!
(to the Prior.)

I err even now in hailing these bright visions:

But I am weak, most weak. +

Prior.

We all are so.

~~Thence are we bound to watch against the tempter. –
Yet must I own that this desire thou feel'st
For fame poetic, thou in thee a failing,
Is yet such failing and few minds can know;
And these must needs be noble. Dids't thou crave
(Far baser goal) base pomp and outward show;
Perchance a Crown and Sceptre, – then, my son,
I should be fain to scorn and pity thee,
As one degraded from thy glorious height
Of servitude to Heaven. Now thy prompt frankness
Makes me remind thee that thy calling's glories
Transcend all earthly fame. And so, farewell!
Go to thy cell my son. – Yet pause awhile!
Some few words more before thou leavest me. Know
Thy cousin's Siward's sons, ages ill in health,~~

217a (8)

+

We all are so.

Prior.

Thence are we bound to watch against the Tempter. –
Yet, best-loved son, such wild desires as these,
Though in themselves unlawful, may be tempered
Perchance to genial heat. In future days,
Thou in the Church's cause ~~indeed~~ may'st strike the lyre,
And celebrate indeed, no earthly passions,
No fickle lusts, unknown methinks to thee –
Say I not sooth!

Alboin. (aside)

Help, Heaven! – (Aloud) Alas! My father –

Prior.

Pause, son! I do not ask confession of thee
Of hellborn promptings, which to all in turn,
(To me, as thee) must breathe the Powers of Darkness. –
I ask thee only, if in love's return
To love's entreaty (thou in me, I trust,
Hast felt and known affection;) thou art right
To bear privation in the cause of Heaven? –
My best-loved child, for so I well may call thee,
Thou know'st the firm-fixed purpose of my life,
For years, hath been, to keep thee from the world
Unspotted. – If thou now desireth to close
My aged eyes in peace – if thou dost cherish me –

Alboin. My father! –

Prior. Then thou wilt not aye desert me? –
Thou wilt abide with me? Wilt overcome
The fiends' fell promptings of ^{the} which I told thee?
Wilt save thyself? – [No Royal Crown or Sceptre,
No base desire for earthly power, could lure thee
From Heaven's appointed service? – Need I ask thee? –
The Beautiful perchance, the Earthly Fair,
(Although the Earthly False,) might tempt thee from me:
But never base desire for Power. I know thee.
Such meanness is not thine. – Enough. For thy sake,
And even for mine who love thee, I implore
A resolute answer. Though art pledged to Heaven!

(9)

Thou wilt not at the latest hour retreat
And scandal cast on us, and Holy Church,
By Heav'n for Earth deserting? – I, who never
Prayed aught from man before, pray now to thee:
Salve then my anxious doubts: give firm assurance
My heart has not deceived me in thy truth,
And prove thee ours for ever! – Speak, my son!

Alboin. – I am yours – – I will not leave you – – –

Prior. It is well.

My soul rejoices in thy constancy. –
Not for my sake, dear son, – I cannot doubt thee; –
(When did'st thou break thy promise? If but to close
The gates of faith hope upon the spectral temptress
Thronging around thee still, seal with a vow
Most solemn, this, thy will! – When thou hast spoken,
I haste to spread the joyous ~~tidings~~ words that thus
No shade of doubt remains 'midst all our brethren –
There is no heart amongst them but shall hold
Its festival to-day. – swear then; loved son,
Before thy God and me, to dedicate
Thy life, alone, to Heaven. Prove thus that thou
Dost falter not with truth; but, as befits thee,
Thy words can'st clench by deeds, whene'er most fitting. –
I wait: – in fear, no more.

Alboin. (aside) Yes, thus I trample

Upon the viper-brood of passion : thus
I end all doubt, all fear. – Heaven prompts to action . –

(Aloud) Beloved father, I do swear, before

Both thee with weakest bent of purpose
At the last hour to yield to hell-born fear. –
– It is enough. – I never have deceived thee. –

Prior. Go to thy cell, dear Son, and arm thee for
The morrow's festival. – My blessings on thee!

~~The reigning monarch Oscar and his brother
 Both, both are bowed by sickness. Should they die,
 (Tis but an idle thought! Yet would I name it.)
 Should they not live, the Crown devolves on thee;
 As well thou know'st, as rightful heir. Though most
 Unfitted for the fearful task that waits
 Our Sweden's Lord, though vowed unto Heaven's service,
 Still wert thou, died those twain, that Sweden's heir,
 And thou might'st thus desert thy sacred calling.
 Now mark me, Alboin! If I but dreamt
 Thou could'st demean thee thus, even in this hour
 Would I constrain thee so to taunt thy Maker
 And rush to earth's delights. Thou must not waver!
 Make thy election or for good or ill!
 Art thou resolved to give thy life to heaven?~~

Alboin. I am resolved.

Prior. Tis well. Retire and pray!
 Thus arm thee for the morrow's festival
 When thou shalt reach the goal. My blessings on thee.
 (Exit Alboin on the left.)

(Osric comes forward)

Prior. What think you now?

Osric. That you have counselled wisely,
 Most wisely, friend. – There would be little fear
 Of his accepting them, were men to proffer a
 Few thousand crowns to such a dreamer. – So,
 Farewell! – I must depart to meet the Trains
 Which by this time have started.

Prior. Lead them hither!
 (Exeunt on the opposed sides of the background)
 (A pause. Then enter Alboin hastily from the left.)

218a (10)

Thou art my Son indeed! – (Exit Alboin on the left)
 (Osric comes forward)

Prior. What think you now?

Osric. That you have counselled wisely, friend: most wisely! –
 There would ^{be} little fear of his acceptance
 Were men to proffer twenty thousand crowns
 To such a dreamer. – Hark thee too, friend Prior! –
 Bravely did'st con thy task of monkish guide. –
 Such love is food most meet for souls like his.
 The daring, that would sway an Empire's weal
 "Is most ignoble baseness!" – and, true strength
 Is shown in dully dreaming life away,
 In cell monastic! – Ha! – Most worthy truths!
 And for such visions men do render being. –
 Most strange!

Prior. – Some power may lie in monkish weakness, –
 Hast never heard, the priests and robber-knights

Divide the world between them? – And, perchance,
Mine's not the lower heritage. – Oh, trust me!
Fools and wise men must be in every calling,
The first, the steps, by which their betters rise;
And each vocation may have pleasures too,
If we but know to grasp them. –

Osric. Fare thee well,
Friend Prior! – I depart to meet the Train
Which must already wend ~~their~~ its progress hither.

Prior. Farewell, brave Osric. – This day crown thy toils!
(Exeunt on the opposed sides of the background.)
(A pause. – Then enter Alboin hastily from the left.)

Alboin. (wildly). My father – He is gone. – What would I now!
Can I retreat? Or would I? – No, my vow
Binds me, must ever bind me. Even for this,
To render all temptation unavailing,
That vow I registered. – What would I then?

219 (11)

Alboin. (solus). I cannot rest within my cell. Good father=
Ha! He is gone. – What would I ask of him?
Myself, I know not. His last solemn words
Have saved my soul: and scarce I feel prepared=
What? Doubt'st thou? Doubst'st thou now? when lies
Thy goal before thee? Oh! tis a dread task
To wean one from the dictates of man's nature;
Perchance as sinful nature – still my nature,
A portion of myself. – Oh! I would fain
Know earthly joys and earthly pleasures, fain
Would roam in freedom o'er earth's verdant glades,
And feel my own humanity. And now
Is this denied. – Atlas! I sin – I sin
In harbouring but the wish: for is not nature,
That very nature which hath aroused these longings,
All sinful? Oh! my very brains reel round!
I dare not think. What then is left but prayer?=
But even our prayer these impious thoughts intrude
And all my soul bewilders. – O dread destiny!
(He stands lost in hopeless reverie)
(Enter from the right a monk conducting Asta.)

–
Confession, make at such an hour as this, –
Of what? – Of love? – Of hell-born passion rather,
Of madness! – Passing madness! – Yes, be sure,
Once shielded by my sacred office duties,
Heaven will preserve me from assaults like these –
Oh! – I am all distraction! – This wild passion
Joined with itself brings thoughts of earthly freedom
Of earthly joy, of fields, and woods, and mountains.

And azure skies – all lost to me. – Yes, yes!
I long to bound without earth's verdant glades,
To feel my full humanity! – I sin
In harbouring even that wish. For is not nature,
This very nature as defined all sinful? –
And Asta? – Oh, I dare not think. My brains

219a (12)

Reel around in madness! – What is left but prayer?–
Yet even on prayer these impious thoughts intrude
And all my soul bewilder. – O dread destiny!–

(He stands lost in reverie)

(Enter, from the right, a monk.)

Monk. A loved companion of thy early years,
Good Alboin, desires to converse with thee,
Before thou tak'st those sacred vows which bar thee
For aye from her society.

Alboin (almost breathless.) Ha! – Asta? –

(To the monk) Away! – I will not see her.

(Enter Asta)

Asta. Twas his voice.

I erred not. – Alboin! –

(She hastens towards him. He half turns away.)

Alboin. (faltering) – – I cannot – – – may not –

Asta. (kissing his hand, imploringly) Dear Alboin!

Monk. Methinks I erred, poor maiden,
In granting thee admittance. Thou disturbest
The meditations of our brother. (to Alboin) Say!
Shall she retire? –

Asta. (in tones of anguish, falling on her knees) O heaven! Speak, speak dear Brother!
Mine wert thou ever. – Wilt thou drive me from thee?
Can'st thou? – O some few moments! – nay – one sign
One sign of brother's love! – I do implore thee:–
Bid me remain. –

Alboin. – – Twere better – thus we parted!–

Asta. (aside) The converse with him ere the grave receive him
To hear his wellloved accents once again,
This must be mine! – (Aloud) I need thy counsel – am
In danger – –

Alboin. Say'st thou?– (To the monk) Leave us!

Monk. (aside). I may err

220 (13)

To bring this youthful Twain together thus!–
And yet our convent's rules permit one parting
Twixt those, who on the morrow find them ours,
And all their dearest. – Counter-orders none
Received I. – Well, on me no blame may rest. –

(Aloud) I leave ye. – Exit monk, R.)

Alboin. (hastily) Speak then! – say: what peril threatens thee?–

How can I aid thee? I? – I aid? – yet, speak!–

Asta. Oh Alboin, how could'st thou find the heart
To turn thee from me, from thy sister, Asta?–
So hast thou ever deigned to call me. – Am
I all forgotten now?

Alboin. – – Speak not of this! –

Asta. Speak not? When now, for the last time on earth,
I greet thee, hear thee speak, hail thee as brother!–
Oh Alboin! This is no sin, believe me!
To cheer my drooping spirits. – Let me woo thee
For some short spaces, the last vouchsafed on earth,
Back, back to earthly loves: for thou did'st love me!–
Mind'st thou that rural home, where, in old times,
We grew together at my mother's knees?
A mother too to thee: for thine, alas!
Died when she gave thee birth. – Twas a poor dwelling,
And yet we thought it fair, – hid in a glade:
Green firs and pinetrees waved aboved our roof,
Through which the wild winds passing hymned sad songs
Which oft we listed on the winter's eve,
In sympathetic sadness. There, we thought,
Mourned gentle fairies for their hopes decayed,
When potent spells of ill had waned their charms
And blasted those they cherished: or, mayhap,
We dreamt of ancient Runic legendry,
(Whose spirit first thou taught'st me to conceive)
And almost deemed, the Spirits of the Good
Forseeing that dread strife of Gods with Demons
In which all beauteous things should perish, roved
Through the night-air, and mourned for time past – fleeting. –
Oh say, dear brother! Dost thou not remember
That ancient volume, filled with legends old,

220a (14)

Of Scandinavia's early age? When Gods
Roamed o'er earth's glades, and Heroes, more than Gods,
Confronted, nay, and vanquished them! – Strange fictions!
And yet, too, filled with a mysterious charm
Which oft thou mad'st me thrill to. – As thou read'st
Of those wild fights, have I not clung to thee
In anxious terror, seeking from thy strength,
Thy childish strength, protection 'gainst all foes? –
And when the sadder sweeter tale we heard
Of the lorn maid who wept her lover slain,
Have I not thrown my arms around thy neck,

And wept upon thy breast? – And thou too wept'st –
Alboin. No more! ' No more ! –
Asta. All this has past away
How soon! – Oh, well I mind me of the hour
When thou did'st leave our cot. Even then had scarce
Ten summers smiled upon us. – But they said,
Thou must away, to lead a nobler life,
And learn – I know not what – of ancient love
Most weighty. But thou soon should'st come again
To greet us, and should'st ne'er thy home forget,
Thy childhood's home! – And so, thee left'st us ..Ah!
Since then, how rarely have we met! How brief
Have been those meetings! –
Alboin (aside) Chanced they never – never
How blest perchance were I!– but now ?–
Asta. Dear brother,
This hast at least thy coldness cast aside:
Look on me fondly. All have I but spoken
To win one lovely greeting. Dear indeed
The memory of those hours: but dearer still,
One present kindly word from thee! Speak! Speak! – +
+I too am lonely in the world. My mother
Dead! My good uncle, kind indeed, yet stern. –
And I – – – Oh, one dear word of love, I pray thee!
Alboin. Asta, ask not – – – Tomorrow as thou know'st
I leave this earth. – I would not wake to earth
Again. A second Death, (one that for which
I strove) to joy or woe, – would work me anguish!–
No more. – Say, only! – What of evil threats thee? –
What peril? Speak!– This, this at least reveal!
I urge thee, I beseech thee. –
Asta. Oh, believe,.
My selfish fears had never wrought on me
By tale like this to mar thy peace. But this,
This only would I gain that converse with thee,
Which had been death to love –
Alboin (interrupting her). Say, I implore thee,
This danger!–
Asta. – – If it must be. – Oh forgive ! –
What should I hide from thee? – A noble then, –
Oh, start not, feel not all too much in this!–
All will be well.
Alboin. Speak! Speak! –
Asta. A noble seeks
My love against my will, – would fiercely claim me

His mistress, not his bride. – He hath fell power,
And vows to wreak such vengeance on my friends,
(My uncle and his nearest) as shall goad me
To very madness, if I yield not – his. –

Alboin. (after a pause, with repressed passion) His name?

Asta. Is Osric. – Whom I know not.

Alboin. How
Met ye?

Asta. In the Cathedral, whence he followed me
Unto my home: my uncle being thence;
So pressed his lawless suit, and when his prayers
Proved bootless, menaced. – Day by day he grows
More urgent in his ire. Still marked his hour
To seek me, still his fearful threats redoubles. –
By day alone my uncle leaves me: thence
He dares not harsher course pursue. But soon

221a (16)

I fear his night–assault with all his vassals
To bear me thence. – And to my uncle speak
I dare not, for his sake. –

Alboin. And I – O Fate!
Can nothing help thee! I must languish here,
And cannot raise my arm to fell the Dastard,
That this assails a Woman! – Righteous Heaven!
Was I but born for idle cries and wishes
In such a World as this, where still fell tyranny
Oppresses all the weak ones! – Asta, say ! –
Is he still young? This Osric?

Asta. In the prime
Of manhood: with high aspect of command;
Dark; his traits firmly fixed. – Perchance, he seems
At least in power, a Hero. – Yet –

Alboin. Thou lov'st him!
Thou lov'st him, Asta ! – Nay, deny it not:
I feel, thou lov'st him! – Oh, I mark too well
The truth.

Asta. Thou errest, Alboin!

Alboin. I err not ! –
Nay, if thou should'st – why then – – – Oh, all in vain,
In vain I strove to hide the truth! I love thee.
Love thee with lawless passion, Asta: – long
Have loved thee thus. – Thou see'st, thou hear'st my shame! -
I who am vowed unto the Cloister's life
Of holy solitude, I love thee, Asta . –

And now farewell! –
The words are spoken that must urge our parting,

And here on earth at least forbid us meet
Again. – But for this Osric, if in sooth
Thou lov'st him not, would'st ne'er be his, go seek
Our Monarch's presence! At his feet implore
His succour: and, be sure, it will not fail thee!

222 (17)

Farewell: forgive the madness of despair! –
Forget me, and be happy! –

Asta. I – – I – – Oh Alboin –

Alboin (wildly) What would'st thou say? –

Speak not! No more ! –

Asta. I must, – though Heaven should blast me ! –
I feel – I know – though never till this hour –
The truth was clearly known – thy love returned :
Yes, Alboin, I die may not live I die without thee –
Without thy light – thy presence –
(She sinks in his arms.)

Alboin. No – no – no!

Impossible! – – Away! – ~~Pause~~ Stay not, I pray thee ! –
To see, to know, this Heaven might yet be mine,
And feel it closed against me – this is anguish. –
Away! – I'll pass my life in prayer for thee –
I can no more – (motioning her away) Farewell!

Asta (with stifled voice) I leave thee. – Heaven,
My heart will break! How guilty was I – thus –
To man – – – no more! – Farewell, my own, for ever !–
(she flies hastily on the right.)

Alboin (Half deadened). My Vow – My Vow –
(he totters to the left and falls on a seat by the side of an oaken
Table, concealing his face with his hands. – Long Pause.)

Jarl Holkar (without). Think ye to block my way?
Hence, hence, dull monks! Jarl Holkar bids ye!–
(he enters hastily, followed by two monks.)

(Then, seeing Alboin, he comes hastily forward and, throws himself on one knee before
him)

Hail,

222a (18)

My Monarch! – Speak to thy true vassal!
(To the monks)

Hence

Vile knaves! – Ye know me, as I think,
And I would commune with my King alone. –
Away! (The Monks retire on the right)
– My Monarch, Royal Alboin,
Receive an old man's homage!

Alboin. (still seated, coldly and listlessly.) Homage, Sir?–

What mean you?

Jarl Holkar. Mean? – Hast thou not heard the tale?–

Oscar is dead, dead is his brother Siward,
The late King's sons. – The Nation's hope art thou!
Its only hope.

Alboin (as above) That hope is vain. – I am vowed
Unto this calling. + –

Jarl Holkar. Tush! Away with doubts!–

Thy name is Alboin. Thou art our Lord:
Thy calling is the Throne. – Throw from thee, sire,
This monkish vestment, that so ill befits
One called to such a warrior-task as thine. –
Nay, loiter not! – A Train are on their way
To proffer thee the Regal Crown of Sweden:
Honour and Power await thee, Glory too:
Wake from thy cloister-trance!

Alboin. My word is plighted.

Jarl Holkar (not heeding him). Rouse thee to action, sire, assert thy rights!.

If monkish study hath not all unarmed thee,
And made – – –

Alboin (motioning him away) No more! – If thou my vassal art,
Obey and leave me!– I have spoken. –

Jarl Holkar. Ha?–

Why, this is brave. – The Heir of Sweden shrinks

223 (19)

From his high duty, and, at fate's great hour,
Doth rather choose Retirement, joined with Safety,
Than Power and Glory by bold Daring won. –
Oh, shameless cowardice, that prompts as youth
In life's fresh prime to fly the field of conflicts,
And sunk in dull monastic death repose,
When lies his country bleeding! – Alboin,
Denmark and Norway lord it o'er thy land:
(for 'tis thy land, or should be!) – and a Rival,
With no more claims to boast than those that fail thee,
The rights of Strength and Valour, seeks thy sceptre,
And lords it o'er thy nobles. – Thou alone
Cans't meet and overthrow him. – Counting on
Thy monkish love of ease and rest, these lords,
And, he, their leader, hither hast, to act
The form at least of yielding thee the sceptre,
Which they expect thee to resign. – But I,
Who knew thy sire, could scarcely deem his son,
The son of such a sire so dastard-hearted:–
And hence do I precede them here, to rouse
Thy soul, if possible, to vigorous zeal

And make the Monk a Monarch. – Wake thee, wake thee!
Thy land must be redeemed. Ay, suffering millions
Call upon thee for aid. The Rights of Man
Is periled. Direst bondage would inflict
Thy Rebel Foes on all the poor of Sweden,
To basest serfage would degrade their host. –
Fight then their battles! – Wake! –

Alboin. (rising; on the foreground L., aside.) My vow! – My vow! –

- – Yet should I – oh, my Country! Dare I, thus
Betray thee ? – – – Asta too +++ might so be mine ! –
Oh, thoughts of rapture! – – – What? – And stain my name
With due dishonour? Prove a Perjurer ? –
It may not, cannot be ! –

Jarl Holkar. Thy answer, youth ! –
Shrink's from the task? – No bed of roses waits thee.
Both home and foreign foes will gird thy throne,
And with bold war and secret guile assail ~~thee~~ thee:

223a (20)

Thy life may soon be sacrificed. – Thy cousins
Died both through poison this doth no man doubt. –
Yet even therefore deem I, they worst foes
Will scarcely dare remove thee thus too soon,
Lest their guilt show too plainly. – What of that?
There's Osric still, Osric of Gurilliedstern,
The mighty youthful warrior to oppose thee, –
And him the monkish Alboin – must fear.

Alboin. (anxiously) Osric? – (aside.) Perchance thy Foe, my Asta! –

Jarl Holkar. (waiting even more animated)

How should the dreaming students meet such ~~[illegible]~~? – ~~[illegible]~~ Ay! –
His very eye might blast thee, and his grasp
Destroy thee ! – – – Yet, thou wilt have Friends ! – Jarl Holkar
Shall aid thee in the strife. – In vain! In vain! –
I fear, thou rear'st the contest; ay, and tremblest,
Even at proud Osric's name. – Why speak I then ? –
Because in sooth I hope against Despair:
I speak in Sweden's cause ——— No more! No more!
Thou hast no power to dare such strife as this,
Even should thy heart desire it. – List! – they come ! –
- Oh, Sweden, Sweden, nought, alas! Can save thee. –

(Enter from the right, Prior Heribert, followed by Osric of Gurilliedstern,
Degeberg, Elmhult, Faroer, Oglendstein, and other Lords, nobles, &c. bearing
A Crown and Sceptre, and the other Insignia of Royalty.)

Prior. (as he passes Alboin, aside to him) Think on thy vow, my son! Defraud not
Heaven!

Osric. (after a pause) Most royal Prince, thou Heir of Siward's Line,
Learn'd Alboin! Behold, a nation's envoys

Low kneeling proffer thee thy Country's Crown:—
Its heir art thou; and, though a weighty load,
Thou still may'st make it thine. — We hear, in sooth,
That thy vocation is of nobler stamp
Than even this of High Imperial Sway,
And that thy Life is dedicate to Heaven. —
Still do we Sweden's Sceptre proffer thee.

Alboin. — And I accept it. —

224 (21)

Osric. (rising, with a start) Ha!

Alboin. I claim that crown,
And I will reign o'er Sweden.

Jarl Holkar. Blessings on thee,
My noblest Monarch!

Prior. Son, thy vow — thy vow!

Alboin. No vow can bind me to my Country's Ruin.
And, if I forfeit my Eternal Peace,
I waver not . — — —

(after a pause.)

My Lords, for Sweden's sake I take this Crown,
For that I hear a thousand foes assail her,
And feel I may not shrink from her defence,
At such portentous hour. — I have been bred
'Midst still conventual ease and drowsy quiet,
And thence perchance seem gird not to my work:
But, with Heaven's aid, ye shall not find me prove
Unworthy of my Sires or false to Sweden. —
Her Foes are mine — Whoever heard me speak,
And seeks her ill, I loudly thus defy.

Degebrt, Elmhult, & many nobles. Long live brave Alboin: the heir of Sweden!

Osric. (striving to break from Faroer, Oglendstein, and other nobles who surround
Him, addressing Alboin) My Lord — — —

Faroer. Peace! — peace! — not now!

Alboin. Ye heard my challenge . —

I will redeem it at the needful hour. —
And now no more of words! — Swift, haste we hence!
I long, I burn, to meet my Sweden's Foes. —
Onwards to Stockholm, Lords! Your Monarch leads ye.

Jarl Holkar. Degebert, Elmhult, Lords &c &c. Long live King Alboin! Live, Sweden's Lord!
(The curtain falls).

Owain Tos^t: So, Asta, tidings are there forth, of which
Thou little dreamest.

Beneath our humble roof thou nothing hearest. –
Yet thou did'st go betimes, this morn, to take
The leave of Alboin – – thy foster-brother!
Thou must have spoke to none upon the way
Thither or thence? –

Deem'st thou, I draw this sword from its old scabbard,
And strive to give it back its edge again? –
Would'st know? – I'd use it, girl, perchance, to face
The Foes of Sweden. – Even thou hast heard,
How many foes beset our Royal Lord!
How many traitors long for his perdition,
And fain would place an upstart on his throne!–
Know then at midnight's hour, he died. –

225 (23)

From Death in Life. – (After a pause, she rises)

Owain Tostedt. On him alone devolves
The crown: and he hath grasped it. – For his sake
Do I this steel prepare: for well I wot
His foes will strive to work his fall. This Osric,
And all his train of myrmidons, will ~~strive~~ thwart him,
And, if they can, destroy. – Yet, if he falleth,
‘Twill be with honor in his country’s cause,
And Time shall wreathe green garlands for his memory,
Such as we’ll cast upon his grave. –

Asta. His grave?

Owain Tostedt. Ay, girl, his grave. (Aside). How deeply is she moved!–
Ha! – Can it be? – Yet no: she loves him only
As sister may love brother. Were’t not so –
And yet assurance harms not. (Aloud) Tell me, Asta!
What fondness feel’st thou for King Alboin?

Asta. – – What fondness? –

Owain Tostedt. Ay; what fondness? – Need I ask thee?
Thou can’st not be so mad as feel aught more
Than sister’s love for one, with whom thy union

225a (24)

Lies not in Nature’s range?

Asta. In Nature’s range?

Owain Tostedt. He is thy King: and thou – my heart misgives me.
Asta, thou can’st not – dar’st not – Ah! Thou sinkest!
Girl! (He supports her) Art thou mad?

Asta. (faintly) He loves me.

Owain Tostedt. Loves thee thus?

As lover? – What could teach thee – – –
(Breaking off, more gently) Poor deceived one!
Fear nought from me: – yet say! Who told thee this ? –

Asta. His lips – this morn.

Owain Tostedt. Before the Crown was proffered?
While he yet deemed him captive; and for ever ? –
Oh idle madness! bootless aimless hopes!
Asta, a wider Gulf than aye’s betwixt ye. –
He can not wed thee, thee, of peasant-race:
Sake by the forfeit of his Crown & Sceptre,
The ruin of his country. – Mark me Asta!
Thy simple innocence hath blinded thee
To this dread certainty. – In Sweden here
Betwixt the nobles and the Burghers’ class,
(Of which, at best, art thou) there lies a deep
Deep, passless chasm. None may leap across:
The attempt ensured his Fall: a fall to depths
Of scorn unspeakable. Thy monarch, Asta,

Should he wed thee, would fall beneath his foes,
That very day, that very hour; if when men
Learnt his dire degradation. – Dost thou mark me?–
His forever love for thee from childhood upwards,
Thy spotless fame, forbids ^{me} even to dream

226 (25)

Of thy dishonor. – As thou know'st, my child,
I am not of many words. – Learn this from me:
If thou persist in this mad desire,
Or giv'st aught heed to his renewed entreaties,
(Should madness prompt them, which I scarce may deem:)
Then wilt thou seal his fall and ~~curse~~ doom thy country!–
I leave thee to thy thoughts, and seek awhile
The city. Further tidings of our monarch
And his foes movements would I learn. – Dear child,
Arm thee with fortitude!– I feel, self-[illegible]
Alone can serve thee now. And so, awhile,
Farewell! – (He embraces her).

Think not I chide thee, dearest Asta!–
The past can be recalled not. Save the future!
(Exit.)

~~Asta. (alone) Alas! And now my tyrant foe approaches
To threat me once again! I dare~~

Asta. The future? – All is past. Life hath no more
Of joy, Of Being. – Can it be? And must
I love thee thus? Even now, when erst I found thee?–
This very morn my own heart's secret first
I learned – first deeply loved – not so! Not so!–
Long –long, hath he been ~~deeply~~ truly purely, dear:
I only knew not of that love: it lay,
Still deep, within . – And now – Oh! reason tells me,
My uncle speaks but sooth: this golden dream
Was a dream only. – What remains? – For [illegible] now,
The thought of what must work him less were madness. –
What rests then?– We must fly from Stockholm straight.
My uncle even and I – This Osric then
May harm us not. – Ha! him had I forgotten!–
Yet could I dare to draw his anger down
Upon my uncle, by – – – To Alboin
(Dear Alboin!) I may not hasten for succour.

226a (26)

What then remains but flight from Stockholm straight;
To save me from my love, and my foe's hatred!–
Ha! – he approaches!– yes, his forgèd key
Breaks through all barriers. Shield me, Heaven! – ~~From here~~ My voice
~~My voice~~ At last might call the passersby – He comes!

(Enter Osric from the Right. He is enveloped in a dark matle, and wears a helmet, the visor of which is down so that his countenance is concealed.)

Osric. – Thou art alone, at last. At last we meet
Again. – Now, fair one, art thou still as headless
Of all my prayers of passion. – (Raising his visor & approaching her) Tremble not:
I will not harm thee, for I love thee, maiden;
The haughty Osric loves thee. – Lo! He kneels,
Here at thy feet, and craves one smile from thee. –
Turn not away! I am no silken wooer,
To brook refusal with a forced content:
Nor am I wont to sue without such answer
As I expect from thee; sweet coy submission
To love's resistless power. – Dost thou not mark me? –
– Nay, silent still?–

Asta. My answer hath been given. –
I know, shameless Lord, for thou art false to all
Of honor's laws, I am a maid of Sweden. –
Let that reply suffice.

Osric. Thou mock'st me only. –
Fair maid, through life I never yet sought goal
Aught urged me to abandon. Thee I love:
With all my warrior=soul, I love thee, maiden;
And soon thou must be mine. – Nay, more than this,
Thou yet shalt love me. – Wherefore should'st thou not?
Time yet hath traced no furrows on my brow,
Nor age my limbs hath palsied: and my soul,

227 (27)

High bounding in its wild exultant glee,
Bears sway o'er others' beings: thence o'er thine.
(Half sportively) For thou hast scarce the power to combat with me,
As thou must, maiden, till thou learn'st to love. –
(Approaching her more closely)

Asta, I woo thee. Haste then to these arias,
These warrior=arias: and be all fears forgotten! –

Asta. I hate thee, recreant knight!

Osric. Even in that hate
Lies love.

Asta. I scorn thee !–

Osric. Dost thou love another ? –
I had thought thy heart a stranger yet to passion:
But now, I see, I feel, – 'tis so. – Whom then,
Whom dost thou love? – Know I his name, I'd blast him. –
Thou tremblest? Ah! Thou fear'st my wrath for him?
What helpless dastard sways thy being thus? –
Thou art silent still: – would'st shield him from my anger? –

Asta. Not so! – I love not – save with sister's fondness –
And that hath one, far, far above thy sphere, –
Whose name would awe thee. –

Osric. Ay, thou dar'st not breathe it!–

Asta. Start not, when I reveal the truth!– Tis strange
That this it should be: but thy Lord, thy Lord
Was my kind foster brother. – Oh I boast not!–
Think not this heart to mean: but else his name
Might rouse thy wonder. – Alboin – thy monarch –
On him I thought alone. –

Osric (fiercely) Thou seal'st his fate!–

Asta. What have I done!– Yet no: he cannot fear thee!–
And yet – what meant'st thou – – –

227a (28)

Osric. Girl, thou hast destroyed him!

Thy Alboin shall perish by this steel. –

(Pauses)

List, maid: thou must be mine. – Tis Osric speaks:
One who shall rule a state, dethrone a monarch,
Bend all mens' will to his. – And yet, thou, thou,
A silly maiden, dar'st oppose my wishes?–
I'd bear thee hence, though thousand foes withstood me:
Yield to thy destiny! – Perchance, if thou
Resistest not, I may yet deign to spare
The monk of whom thou speak'st: but, by high Heaven,
If thou dost thwart my will, I'll have him rent
Piecemeal, and cast to dogs, their fitting garbage. –
Tremble, and yield, for his sake!– Thus, fair maid,
I hail thee mine.

(He is about to cast his right arm around her.)

Asta. (Avoiding his grasp, and speaking with calm dignity)

Away! – Thou can'st not fright me:–

Despite thy power, I dare thee, I, so weak. –
Unmanly Lord, I feel that Alboin,
Thy monarch, not by birth alone, but mind
Powers thy superior: ay, and shall defeat thee. –
All fears, all scruples now, to duty yields. –
To him I go, to warn him of thy guilt! –
Seek not to stay me: for my voice would reach
My friends without!– Tis thou may'st tremble now.
Farewell!. (exit on the right)

Osric (alone) Go, maiden!– Thou mak'st more sure,
More swift his hour of fate! This day, within
The Council, shall this monk-king sink for ever.

228 (29)

And I would have him know, that I who thrust him

From his high throne of state, am also he,
 Who claim his loved one mine: for, if I [illegible] not,
 Her voice, her mien, all spoke, she loved, not vainly,
 Without return. – Accurs'd thought! She love?
 And shall he in his fall this consolation
 At least retain: her heart is all his own? –
 No: he must learn to think her false; must die
 In that belief: perchance the truth alone! –
 For once within my power, and soon she shall be,
 Nought know I or of woman's wile or ways,
 Can I not mould her to my bent. – Enough! –
 - Poor monk. I pity thee: thou hast aspired,
 By madness urged to seize the crown I covet, –
 Now even her love – by heaven, the thought is death! –
 Youth, thou shalt perish! – Asta works thy ruin.

(Exit)

Scene 2nd

(Grand Hall in the Royal Palace. Chief entrance in the
 centre of the background. Others, right & left, in front.)
 (Alboin, clad in the regal robes, Jarl Holkar, Suraborg, Lady Cas
 –silda, Degebert, Elmhult, Lords, Ladies &c.)

Alboin. I thank you, friends, for this your kindly greeting
 To one who now first treads his father's halls.
 And oh, believe, I shall not soon forget
 Those who first welcomed me in loyal gladness.
 Within three hours, all Sweden boasts of Great
 And noble shall in this proud hall assemble
 To hail their new made Monarch. Duty then
 Shall summon all. But love hath hasted you

228a (30)

To bear your homage even before the term
 Appointed, and thus show your zeal most faithful.
 Thanks then, once more, to one and all! – For me,
 I must now commune with myself awhile,
 To arm my soul for this most solemn hour
 Approaching, when before my loyal subjects,
 It shall be mine to speak my heart's resolve,
 And plight my regal faith to glorious Sweden. –
 Till then, farewell!

Suraborg. Heaven guide your counsels, sire,
 And prompt the better course to meet all dangers!

(All retire, bowing lowly as they pass the Monarch. Jarl Holkar only, at a
 sign from Alboin, remains.)

Alboin. They are gone: and I have time to think. – Oh, since
 This morn, what change hath o'er my being past,–

What wondrous change. – I am another now,
 And not myself:– or rather feel at last
 I am myself indeed. – Oh, ecstasy,
 To speak, to move, unchecked, ~~to~~ unchecked to think,
 And glory in my freedom!– Faithful friend,
 How much I owe thee! Had'st thou roused me not,
 Had'st thou not woke my soul to active being,
 What were I now? – A clod, a dull machine,
 An earth–worm only crawling 'neath dark shadows
 Towards my only course, the grave. And now,
 I live – I breathe – Oh joy!– The very sunbeams
 Seem but to smile for me: till now, methinks,
 They never smiled or shone. Ay, the wild breeze,
 All haste to greet the mortal, who with rapture
 First shares their boundless freedom. Earth, and skies,
 And air, all seem to hail me as a comrade:
 Now am I first enrolled amongst the free. –

229 (31)

Oh, my good friend, thou little know'st the chain
 That erst did bind me, and, thence, may'st not feel
 The rapture of deliverance from such thralldom. –
 T'was not my frame alone was bound. My soul
 Lay caged, like a chained eagle, in its cell:
 And every thought that dared releasement covet
 Seemed sin, dire sin, which worked me deep disgrace. –
 I dreamt – for now I feel tw'as but a vision,–
 I should please Heaven by rendering up my all
 Of earthly joy as incense on its shrine:
 I dreamt, that each glad impulse was a crime,
 For which deep grief alone could work me pardon. –

O baseless dream! For now, I feel, I feel,
 Each lofty instinct that is planted in me
 Was given not to smother but employ. –
 Sweet poesy! Thou fountain of delight,
 From which my thirsting spirit drinks with rapture,
 I will not fear thee now, or shun thee more! – – –

Jarl Holkar. (severely) Yet scarce is this a time for toy=like pleasures,
 My monarch! – Dangers – – –

Alboin. Nay, I long to hail them,–
 Oh, I would test myself, and I do feel,
 There is a joy in conflict: ay, there must be!
 To weigh my forces with my haughty foe's
 And meet him in the strife of soul with soul,
 True, this I know not yet. – Yet have I read
 Of valiant hearts and deeds until my spirit

Breathed in wild unison and half desired
A thousand foes of right to grapple with,
And quell, for justice' sake. – And now the foes

229a (32)

Of Sweden throng around me, should I fear them?
By Heaven, my heart anticipated the hour
When we shall meet in conflict, and our strength
Be tested by the issue.

Jarl Holkar. My brave monarch!
How have I wronged thee! – Oh, with joy for thee
Would I too combat with thy foes. – Yet pause we!
Rush not too blindly on their treacherous host
Lest in their snares thou fallest. – List, I pray thee:
For I would show thy foemen's means of harm
And point thy weapons of defence.

Alboin. Speak freely!

Jarl Holkar. First then, remember, that the Banded Powers
Of Denmark and of Norway, wish thy downfall,
And know, their party 'midst our own first lords
Is numerous and most weighty. – Worse than this,
(For foreign foes are nought to nature) there's
A discontented band of noblemen
Would elevate themselves to power supreme
~~Would~~ And crush their vassals in the dust beneath them,
Who deem they ne'er their hearts' desires shall gain
Till one from their own troop the throne hath mounted. –
Our Royal Line they hate: and thee, its last
Descendant, fain would hurl to ruin. – Yet,
The crown all this, one valiant Lord there is –
(That I decry him not) who o'er the rest
Hath gained unbounded influence and secured
Their voices for his royal rule, on thy
Ejection. – Friendly is he too with Norway,

230 (33)

With crafty Denmark: for their monarch deems,
Osruc would prove their creature on his throne
And work their will most meekly. – Herein much
They err, Heaven knows, for he would [illegible] not. Though
I hate him, this I'll witness. – Well, this lord,
(Osruc his name, Osruc of Gurilliedstern),
Stands in the first of these, conflicting factions,
Chief hope of both, thy deadliest foe.

Alboin. (half aside) This Osruc?–

I know that name, and should have cause to hate it. –

(aloud) He is valiant?

Jarl Holkar. Ay, my liege, a mighty warrior:

Gifted with such strange inward power that few
Can meet his gaze unshrinking.

Alboin. Is he good
And noble?

Jarl Holkar. He? A heartless tyrant, sire,
Who knows no mercy save his foes submissive
Prostrate themselves before him in the dust. –
He is of those who brook not opposition:
And every fiery instinct Heaven hath placed
Within him must attain completion's goal
Whatever his victims suffer. – Such is Osric.

Alboin. And shall I long not for the conflict with him? –
I fear to boast: but even should his force
Superior blight me, I could die with pride
In injured weakness' cause. – When shall I meet him?

Jarl Holkar. Right soon: in Sweden's high assembly, even
This day. – And oh! my King, I greatly fear,
He and his faction then will rise against you
And strive to hurl you from your height of sway. –

230a (34)

List then: some few remain, still tried and faithful,
Who will, whatever may chance, support the throne.
But half of all are nobles there assembled,
Full half belong to those twin rival factions
Which both acknowledge Osric as their head.
The more part of the rest will give their voices
For or against thee, and proud Suraborg prompts
The ambitious chancellor: and him, my king,
Tis in thy power to make, or friend, or foe.

Alboin. How mean'st thou?

Jarl Holkar. Know, he hath a daughter fair
And virtuous; his only child. To raise her
To highest state and power hath he his life
Devoted: and he helped to our late Monarch
Bold Oscar to consign her, as his bride. –
Casilda is she hight, and she is proud;
But beauteous: and I ween full noble feelings
Lurk in her bosom's hold. – This Osric too,
Osric of Gurilliedstern, thy deadliest foe,
Hath to her father in half-doubtful language,
(Yet well conceived,) declared his readiness
To make her his for ever. – Dost thou mark me?
With this high goal before his eyes, thy father
Is like to abandon thee: and one course only
Remains to win his favour. – For the assembly
Declare, this day, that thou, yet new to rule,

Wilt trust thee to the counsels sage of Suraborg
And hop'st in him to find a friend alike,
And faithful monitor: and more, to seal
The union of your hearts, thou fain would'st crave,
In token of his love and thy true friendship,

231 (35)

The hand of his fair daughter. –

Alboin.

Never!

Jarl Holkar.

Ha!–

Be not too rash, my liege, nor – –

Alboin.

Friend, no more!

I have declared my will, and nought shall shake it. –
What? Dost thou deem I'd change my late fell bonds
Of servitude for others, even as hateful,
As galling to my soul? Would'st have me wed
A maid I love not? And as deeply break
Kind nature's laws, and were I bound for aye
To dreary solitude? – Oh, never, never. –
Rather earth's fellest perils would I face,
Rather meet myriad foes, than act this basely.
May more; know, friend, I love. – Start not in wonder!
Day's light must shine within a convent's walls
And there are thoughts and hopes no vows can banish.
Ay, ay, I love. With pride, with joy, I feel it.
Erst in that knowledge lay a world of woe:
That woe is changed to rapture. Yes, I love –
A maid so fair, so gentle in her beauty,
So all unconscious of her [illegible] own sweet charms
She seems in sooth like nature's self, which fills
All hearts by its bright smiles with joy and rapture
Yet hath no knowledge of its loveliness. –
And her pure mind, her dear, dear heart, which 'gainst
Her will confessed she loved me – – –

Jarl Holkar. Of whom speak'st thou?

Alboin. A lovely maiden by her birth, my friend:

231a (36)

Asta her name, but my sweet foster-sister,
And soon, ay, soon, my bride!

Jarl Holkar. This may not be!–

What? – Sweden's monarch wed a peasant's child?–
Thou know'st not what a passless gulf is placed
Betwixt ye. By law and customs course betwixt ye. Never, never,
Could Sweden's lord degrade him thus; yet reign. –
E'en they most loyal friends would rise against thee
Could'st thou thus err. Then, then, wert thou in sooth
Defenceless.

Alboin. I care not. – She shall be mine!

Jarl Holkar. And dost thou think upon thyself alone,
And on thy wishes? – Thou art Sweden's monarch.
Can'st thou betray thy country to her foes?
For all is lost if thou thus sinnest.

Alboin. What?–

Am I still chained?

Jarl Holkar. Thou art; and aye must be,
Bear'st thou a noble heart, by these demands
Others defenceless else and lost make on thee. –
Think on that host, of which this maid is one,
Whom thy fierce nobles would to serfage humble,
From this thou yet may'st save them: but, before
Thou would'st but seal their fate, and thine with theirs,
By culling from their world thy bride. Such acts
Were all unparalleled in our history. –
Thy zeal for human sights would them appease
Their selfish interests; as it would be, truly!–
And should'st thou sacrifice the world to self?

232 (37)

And doom thy country but thy goal to gain?–
Thus might an Osric act, my liege, but not
Christian Alboin. –

Alboin. I fear – I fear,
Thou may'st speak justly. – Yet – – –

Jarl Holkar. Nay, doubt not, sire!
On this side, justice speaks; on that, your love.
The soul, not heart, be judge!

Alboin. Can I thus lose her?
Life, must I yield thine all? – –
– Who comes? –
(Enter attendant from the background.)

Attendant. My liege,
A female veiled, without, craves audience of you,
Asta her name.

Alboin. Ha – Asta?

Jarl Holkar. It is she! –
(To Alboin) Thou must not see her. (To Attendant)

Bid the woman hence:–

Her monarch hath no time for converse now.

Alboin. Pause! – She shall enter. (To Attendant) Go: bid her draw nigh.

Jarl Holkar. My liege, this madness –

Alboin. Peace! My will once spoken
Nought earthly moves. (Attendant goes)

(To Jarl Holkar) Leave me!–

Jarl Holkar. Even yet, I warn thee

List not her voice: or, fall!

Alboin.

Away! – By heaven

232a (38)

Thou all but woo'st me to forget myself
And chide so true a servant. – Nay, believe me,
I love thee not the less for thy loud zeal. –
But, we must meet! She seeks protection of me
From a dread foe, who ~~seeks~~ strives to force her love;
And I will grant it. – Fare thee well awhile. –

(Affectionately) Part we not foes, because I seem to slight
Thy kindly counsel!

Jarl Holkar. Foes? – (Aside) By Thor, the boy

Dost sway me with a smile. –

(Aloud, as he departs)

Yet, sire, remember!

(Exit on the left.)

Alboin. (alone) And now to meet her, next to tell her, I

Am false to her and love. – It must be so.

Justice and Right command; – yet in the thought
Lies madness.

(Enter Asta veiled, in the background, ushered by Attendant, who immediately retires)

Asta. (coming forward, hesitatingly) – Sire – – my liege – –

Alboin.

Not thus – not thus

Speak to me, Asta! – Still thy brother ever. –

Asta. Oh, my good lord – –

Alboin.

Speak! Speak! – I know what thou

Would'st claim; protection. – I myself besought thee
To seek it of thy king: and – most strange fortune!
That king am I.

Asta.

– Then on my knees before thee – – –

233 (39)

Alboin. Rise, rise, thou shalt not kneel, to me? ~~thy brother?~~ To me,
Thy brother? (He raises her.) Say: this wretch who would oppress thee,
Hast thou again beheld him?

Asta.

Even now.

Alboin.

And he hath menaced –

Asta.

Death to thee, my liege! –

And therefore came I thither.

Alboin.

Death to me?

Thou errest.

Asta.

No, I err not! – He is mighty

And much is his power. A thousand friends
Wait but his order to destroy thee.

Alboin.

Say: And

His name? –

Asta. Even Osric! More I know not now. –
Alboin. Osric of Gurilliedstern, my foe – tis he! –
And doubly now my foe, for thy sake, Asta. –
Say, did he threat thee?

Asta. He would bear me hence
By force, to his far home, would I not love him. –

Alboin. Base [illegible]! – Oh! that he and I could meet
Even now alone and far from men, on some
Independent cliff that fronts the ocean; whence
The victor in the strife could hurl his foe,
Down, down to dire perdition! – Fear not, fear not!
I will protect thee, Asta. – – And for me,
Thou camest hither?

Asta. – Oh, my gracious liege,
Let me depart, I pray thee! – – I am weary
With haste and care! – – and rest – – –

233a (40)

Alboin. ~~Nay~~ Stay; leave me not:
~~Not yet~~ Thou must not leave me yet. – I must yet speak.
My earthly doom before we part. – Dear Asta,
A faithless wretch am I: thou know'st, I love! –
And yet – –

Asta. No more, my monarch! –

Alboin. Thou art pale?
Thou faintest? – Ha! – nay then, perdition blast me,
But thou must yet be mine! My own, my loved one,
My fondest truest bride, my wife! – Yes, Asta,
Though heaven should dare its lightnings all to blast me,
I can not, can not, break my faith with thee. –
And, oh! I feel it, there's a power within
My inmost soul, shall steel me for the task
Of peril, shall secure me victory yet. –
Even for my country's sake itself, I claim thee:
Did I not this, I should be all unmanned
And sink before the foes that would destroy me.
But now, pure love shall give me boundless strength,
Deep resolution, nought can change or weaken,
And I will reach my goal. – Speak, speak, dear Asta!
Thou hast not ceased to love me? – O wild fancy! –
And yet – and yet – perchance thy heart deceived thee
Thy momentary grief in losing me, ~~for~~
Then thought'st for ever – this might well – Oh speak!
Destroy these doubts. –

Asta. (aside) Heaven, steel me! –
(Aloud, after a long pause, with a half stifled voice)

234 (41)

It is so.

Alboin. Ha – Asta? –

Asta (as above) – – Spare me! – I have spoken. – – I –
As sister – love.

(Alboin buries his face in his hands and remains silent. Long pause.)

Asta. Farewell, my brother! (She bursts into tears.)

Alboin. (Turning wildly towards her.) Ah!

Those tears! – Vain hope! And yet – and yet – Deceive not
Thyself and me, oh, Asta! – If thou lov'st me,
Think that by this denial thou ensurest
My earthly anguish: let no idle thoughts
Of my high station and thy lowliness
Tempt thee to doom me thus! – But I am cruel. –
My Asta, I but live in thee! – Forgive,
Forgive this seeming hastliness. –

Asta. (aside) Oh kind Heaven!

Alboin. My answer, then beloved one! Feel the heart
That beats alone for thee! – My answer! –
(He bends over her)

Asta. (faintly) Pity – – this eve – I promise – – These few hours
Grant me. To seal my fate! – And now, release me,
I pray thee, – I implore thee, – –

Alboin. Thou commandest? –
I yield. – And yet, ungrateful youth rejoice
Rejoice one ray of hope is left thee still! –

Asta. – – I do beseech you, let me fly part! –

Alboin. I leave thee,

234a (42)

Beloved one: Thou hast but to command,
And I obey. – Farewell! – Believe, dear Asta,
Without the ray of hope thou thus has granted,
I could not meet my thousands foes this day! –
Think then: and oh, decide, as thy heart bids thee! – (Exit)

Asta. (alone) My heart? – Ah! He is gone! – I breathe again. –

His voice, his presence, all-too-potent charm ~~worked~~
Worked they. – I half forgot my firm fixed duty.
Whatever passion prompts his tongue to speak
Our union seals his fall: that, that, remember
Weak erring soul: – to duty's path return! –
Yes, even this eve must I entreat my uncle
To fly with me: for Alboin, I doubt not,
Must triumph o'er his foes. Who could resist him? –
This Osric & his host? – No, never more! –
But he will follow me, will track my flight
Will view it as avowal of my love,
Will thus yet seal his ruin. – I must take

Some means my late urged falsehood to renew,
 To prove, I love him not! – Swift to my uncle! –
 He as retainer midst Jarl Holkar's train
 May gain admittance to the Council-hall,
 May bear the missive to my monarch, vouching
 My life love a sister's only. – Arm me, Heaven;
 Let me my selfish love, a sacrifice
 At true love's altar render: let me die,
 If I but know him saved from loss through me!
 Will there not be a sweetness in such death!
 There will! There will! – Oh never yet was deed
 Of self resignation bore not recompence. –
 Away! Lofty Alboin I haste to save thee!–

235 (43)

As she turns hureedly to depart)
 The curtain falls.

Act 3rd

Scene 1st

(Grand hall of the Assembly in the Royal Palace.

Three ranges of steps on both sides run from the depths of the background to within a few paces of the front. Pillars are reared at intervals, which appear to meet in the far distance. The Great Entrance is on the centre of the right, dividing the ranges of steps on that side into two compartments. Another entrance on the foreground, left. –)

(Enter from the left Jarl Holkar, followed by retainers, amongst Whom Owain Tostedt. At the same time from the Great Entrance, Swa: Borg, Lady Casilda, Degeberg, Elmhult, Lords, Ladies &c. – Trumpet blasts.)
Jarl Holkar. (to Suraborg.) My lord, in you at least I trust to hail

Our Monarch's loyal friend.

Suraborg. May he act wisely,
 That all may prove his friends, as well as I!

Jarl Holkar. Wisdom and youth are oft apart, good Suraborg:
 And thence hath youth more need of loyal service,
 Springing from zeal instinctive.

Suraborg. Such as yours,
 My worthy Lord. – Scarce can I hope to reach you
 In race like this; yet lag I not behind.

(Suraborg, Lady Casilda, and all Degebert, Elmhult, &c &c place themselves on the range of steps on the left of the hall.) (Trumpet blasts)

(Enter Faroer, Galtren, and many nobles in the interest of Denmark And Norway, from the Chief Entrance. They exchange greetings with Suraborg and his friends, and finally occupy the ranges of steps on the right, beyond

235a (44)

The Chief Entrance.)

Jarl Holkar (in front) Behold the accurs'd spies in foreign pay!
These hate I worst of all. – Most odious faction,

That or for Denmark or for Norway combats,
And Sweden at her foeman's feet would lay. –
And see! Here come the Chief Conspiritors,
Osric and all his train. – Of, could I blast them!–
They bear some fell design. – Ay, ay, I err not:
I read it in their every glance too well,
Their every gesture. – Of, Heaven shield my Monarch!

Trumpet blast. Then Enter Osric von Gurilliedstern, Oglendstein, Vasmer, and many other Nobles, who occupy the steps to the right of the Chief Entrance, towards the for ground. – Osric himself stands in the front row and nearest to the spectators.)

(A pause. Then a loud blast of trumpets is heard: and Alboin enters, in his royal robes through the Chief Entrance, unattended by guards, and advances to the front of the stage.)

Confused cries. (from different parts of the hall.) Hail, Alboin! Hail Sweden's Lord!

We greet

thee.

Alboin. Thanks, Friends. In Sweden's hallowed name, I thank you. –
Her Monarch am I; thence her servant here,
Who speak in her high cause. – Still ne to me
Are speech alike, and action: for within
These walls, where past my youth, I have but slumbered
And now erst wake to life. – Oh, deem not therefore,
That I am all unworthy your esteem. –
I slept, I own it; yet e'en feeling this
Argues, I sleep no more. And Time shall prove it. –

Suraborg. He speaks it fairly.

Jarl Holkar. Nobly!

Many nobles. Live the King!

236 (45)

Live Royal Alboin!

Others. Yet hear the cud!

Alboin. In all is boasting most ungracious, Friends,
And, most of all, in youth; such youth as mine
That hath been dull and lifeless. – Still, I boast –
And oh! forgive the heart that breaks all fetters,
That speaks although my better reason chide! –
I boast at least my love for my dear Country;
I boast my heal to work her foes annoy. –

Jarl Holkar. Still noble, oh, most noble!

Lords. (confusedly, but loudly) Live the King!

Osric. (to his friends.) Weakness commends its feelings to your hearts
For lack of deeds. –

Oglendstein & Others. Ay! – Let him speak! – Poor dreamer! –

Alboin. – Little of arms know I: – but this, good friends,
Is my misfortune, not my crime. I ~~shall~~ trust
That though in sooth not nurtured in war's pastimes,
My heart may still as warmly best to conquer
Loved Sweden's foes, nay, even perchance in time,
My arm be all as firmly braced to slay them,

As had my youth in knightly sports been fashioned,
Or hardened in the lusty school of war. –

Nobles. Live Alboin!–

Alboin.

Now to more pressing matter!–

I know that we have foes. Nay more, this knowledge
Hath led me to abandon monkish rest,
And take this post of danger, and of power. –
I know too, or at least have heard, yet scarce
Such tale could credit, that amongst those nobles,
Who should be wardens of our native land,
Are some who wish its downfall, who would see
Its foes triumphant:– some too, rumour tells me,

236a (46)

Who'd rob our Royal Line of Sweden's Crown,
And on ~~the~~ a leader of their trains bestow it. –
Oh, Friends: for friends ye must be to my youth,
My inexperience, and my love of Sweden, –
Can this be so? Can men of noble lineage
Sully the fair fame of their ancestors
By plots and deeds like these? – I'll not believe it ! –
Nought but their own avowal of their guilt
Shall in my thoughts convict them. – So, my friends,
I stand before you here, unarmed, defenceless,
A stranger in a world ne'er seen till now:
And pleads not this my cause? – Yes, think not, dream not,
I claim your mercy. If love prompt you not
Let hate inspire you but to active daring,
And I will meet my foes. – Whate'er betide,
I stoop not that to claim and grace from you
Which I command as duty. – Hear me now
Before high heaven and in your presence swear,
To dedicate my life unto my country;
To love her friends; to hate her foes, to guard
My subjects all, unheeding rank or station:
In all, to live, as knew I, that to heaven
For Sweden's welfare I account must give,
And from her weal or woe expect my judgement! –
This do I swear, by Him, the Lord o'er all. – –
Say: will ye aid me?

Confused cries.

Long live Alboin!

Long live our Sweden's Monarch!

I have spoken. –

And nought remains save that I crave the counsel
Of all, with loyal hearts, and mostly of those,

237 (47)

Who have of late held office high in Sweden
Even such as them, wise Suraborg.

Suraborg.

Royal Sir,

I am honoured in your trust.

Alboin.

If friends there should be,

Who crave new changes in our commonweal
That will not shake but even more firmly base it,
Let them speak now: for I am prompt to hear. –

Osric. (stepping forward.) Then, sire, attend my words! – I speak not now
In mine own name alone: though that perchance
Would scarce be slighted here. A thousand nobles
Make me the spokesman of their discontents:
And even hadst thou, O sire, my speech forbidden,
Still were I bound to force it on thine ear!–

Alboin. More courteous words, for your own sake, Lord Osric,
It is your monarch speaks. –

Osric. Three Chief Demands
Make we in Sweden's name.

Alboin. Will't please you name them?

Osric. First seek we for an ancient wrong redress,
Or rather freedom from an ancient grievance
That long hath sorely press'd on Sweden's Peers. –
Custom stipulates that every bondman
Who deems his rights unheeded by his Lord
May have recourse unto the Lord of Sweden,
And plead his rebel cause before the Crown.
Thence spring dissensions dire and numberless
Twixt lord and vassal: thence obedience' bond
Is often rent in twain, and the base kind
Would lord it o'er his master. – Of this grievance
We claim the prompt removal.

Alboin. Do ye so?–

237a (48)

Ye would have power unchecked o'er all your vassals:
To fetter or to slay them?– Well, – tis well. –
To the second point!

Osric. This too refusal brooks not. –

Those who now hold the reins of state are all
Unfit to grasp them; your wise Chancellor,
Suraborg, alone, excepted: – thence must they
Be quick dismissed from power, and, in their stead,
Such men be placed, as those, who love their country
And act from past experience, shall select
Such men, and shall have brains to think, and arms
To fight, for Sweden: such, in fine, as those
For whom I speak would raise to power right gladly.

Alboin. Most loyal counsel! – Come, your third demand:–
Is that as kindly meant?

Osric. First hear: then judge!–
The youth, which thou thyself avow'st, and, more,
Thy utter inexperience pitying.
My friends would urge thee to this step of prudence. –
Unto the Council, formed of those we erst
Commended to thy favour, even most sage,
Who well could rule where thou would'st err most blindly,

Unto this Council do thou day by day
Thy plans and deeds submit: that they may teach thee
Where thou hast erred [illegible] in the past,
And how thou should'st demean thee for the future. –
This is our Third Demand, the which accepting,
Thou may'st our arms and counsels count thine own. –
Alboin. Your arms and counsels? – So did I conceive you . –
And now, my Lord, receive your Lord's reply! – –
I will not yield my subjects to your fury,
Your unchecked tyranny, your fiery lust;

238 (49)

Nor will I give high state and power to traitors,
Ejecting, for their sake, their betters far;
Nor will I make myself an useless shadow,
And live, a Monarch, yet a dastard-slave. –
I will not. – In the same of all the weak ones,
Whose friend I still will rest, in Sweden's name,
Whose loyal counsellors I will not banish,
And in my name, the name of Alboin,
Whose sires have reigned o'er Sweden, take this answer:–
None but a traitor such demand could make,
None but a traitor such reply shall know, –
Thou art a base assailed of thy Country,
A heartless slave – whom I arrest – even thus!

(He seizes the collar of Osric's mantle as he speaks the last words.)
Oglendstein, Faroer, Lords, Nobles &c. (rushing forward and surrounding
Osric, whom they separate from Alboin.)

Down with the Monkish Dreamer! – Let him perish!–
(The conspirators draw their swords. Alboin, Jarl Holkar and
His retainers draw also.)
(Suraborg, Elmhult, Degebert, and other nobles throw themselves be–
Twixt the contending parties.)

Suraborg. Be not too hasty! – Sheathe your swords, I pray you :–
Hear yet your monarch speak! –

Osric. Ay, hear him, Swedes!

Pause ho! Much yet remains behind, of which
Ye dream not yet. – Ye know the discontents
Of all our kinds, who fain would break allegiance
And claim an equal liberty of will
With us. This monarch, if I so may call him,
This monkish dreamer, purposes to place
These vassals on a par with Lords. –

Alboin. Not so!–

238a (50)

I claim for them unbounded Freedom – true;
Naught of equality, that lawless day dreamer
Save before God and Justice.

Osric. He confesses
And glories in the thoughts. Know, in a word,
He would abolish vassalage. Yet more,

To crown the whole, as guerdon for his pains,
To prove how wholly void of self his purpose,
To gain triumphal goal, he would ally
The Crown of Sweden with a peasant-maid!–
What think ye?

Violent cries & murmurs. Shame! – He may not reign! – Down with him!

Suraborg. If this be true, – I say, if this be true,
No choice is left one. – King of Sweden ne’er
May thus degrade him. –

Jarl Holkar. (to Alboin) Now, my Monarch, save thee!
Abjure ~~this vile attempt!~~ such dread desire. defeat thy foes!
Contemn the slander! –

Alboin. Slander? – Would’st thou bid
A son of Sweden lie? – A Royal Son?–
Swedes, he hath spoken truth, this rebel here:
Nor would I deign to win a thousand worlds,
Denial of my love. –

Confused & general cries. Enough! – Destroy him! – [~~illegible~~]
– Osric be Sweden’s Lord! – –

(Suraborg and his Friends join the ranks of the Conspiators – – Jarl Holkar and
His retainers still surround Alboin.)

Owain Tostedt, (aside) Now let me seize the moment. If he reads
The missive, see all hope of love denied,
He may gain strength even yet to face his foes,
To promise he will never wed beneath him. –

(To Alboin) My monarch! – From young Asta – –
(He presents her missive)

239 (51)

Alboin. Ha! – (He reads) – “As sister”.
“No hope” – “no passion” – – Heaven! –
(He hides his face in his hands, as if paralysed.)

Osric. (loudly) Oh, nobles, oh!
Disgraced is Sweden’s Throne: – avenge your Country!

(All the conspirators, Oglendstein, Faroer, Suraborg, Elmhult, &c &c again draw and
Rush forward.)

Jarl Holkar. Swedes to the rescue! – Let us die with honor!

Osric. (cutting him down) Die thou, the first!

Jarl Holkar. Oh traitor slave! – [~~illegible~~] Monarch! –
(He falls and dies. – His vassals fly.)
(Alboin stands on the left alone and defenceless.)

Conspirators. Down with the Monk!–

Alboin. Strike, slaves! – Your Monarch dares ye.

Osric. Be’t mine to smite the Dreamer! –

Suraborg. Pause! I pray thee. –

Other conspirators. Let him not die!–

Suraborg. But live, dethroned; an outcast! –

(to Osric) The crown be thine!–

Osric. In truth ye err not, friends,
I purposed but to scare and scarce destroy him.
His crime is but his weakness. This should prove

His safe-guard too. Let him go forth uninjured:
Monarch of no more, but subject of the State
And its new Ruler, whoso'er he prove;
Gainst whom his first attempt ~~shall~~ to work sedition
Shall punished be with Death.

Suraborg. Tis wisely spoken! –

Conspirators. Let him go forth!

Suraborg. And prove a loyal subject! –

Osric. (to Alboin) Then list, vain youth:– In Sweden's honored name,

239a (52)

Do we depose thee from thy Royal office;
Deeming one nursed like thee in monkish slumber
Unworthy Sweden's warlike race to sway.
Go forth, dull boy, and tell thy beads again
Mutter thy aves, chant and pray, God willing:
Thy fittest sceptre is a rosary,
Thy sword a monkish curse. Hence, and thank Fortune!
Alboin. And ye would spare me? – Spare? – So think ye then,
Life seems a treasure to me! – Traitor slaves:
The life ye take not I would lose. – Oh, Asta ! –
For ye, ye can not harm me now. Above
Your feeble wrath am I, for life hath lost
Its value. – yet, what say I? – Self, self speaks. –
I will yet live, if Heaven allow, for Sweden! –
Yes, traitors, yes, I scorn your idle threats:
I live to blast ye and to save my country. –
Come, on, and strike! – Ye dare not. – Oh, I know,
'Tis dastard policy that prompts your mercy.
Ye fear the people's wrath; who, if ye slew me,
Might rise upon their tyrants. – Do ye dream,
That I will live your slave? – Henceforth, my hours
To Sweden and Revenge I dedicate.
Ye dare not murder me, ye dare not stay me;
Ye feel the awe which Majesty inspires,
And shrink before me even now:– I scorn ye. –
In me speal all my Royal Ancestors,
Those men who raised your fathers from the dust;
In me they dare ye to the strife. – Now, triumph!

(He passes calmly and with proud dignity to the Grand Entrance)

Tumultuous cries. Hail Osric, Lord of Sweden! – Osric – hail! –

(The Curtain falls).

Act 4th
Scene 1st

(Apartment in the Royal Palace. – Time. Twilight./

(Osric seated and Oglendstein in converse entering to him. –

Osric. (rising) What tidings bring'st thou?

Oglendstein.

Good; my Sovereign Liege. –

Our plot hath thrived. The friends of this said Tostedt,
Or seeming friends (more truly ours,) have lured him
To bid his Asta call her monkish lover
At midnight to her dwelling, there to meet
With these imagined wellwishers and counsel
Such plots as may restore him to his power sway. – +
+ Thus [illegible] Tostedt works our will
And thinks to serve thy foe, this monkish dreamer.

Osric. Well done, good friend. – If I do know this youth,
He will not fail to grant his Mistress' [illegible] suit:–
And she hath beauty that might lure our angel,
Ay, or the fiends to boot. – And Tostedt bears
Her missive to him?

Oglendstein.

Even so.

Osric.

And he.

Where lurks he?. Alboin?

Oglendstein.

Sire, in the City

About the Public Square, enveloped closely
In sweeping garments.

Osric.

Are our friends on guard?

Oglendstein. They do so, Sire.

Osric.

'Tis well. I will surprise him in her presence,
And she shall bear the guilt. – Away! – Thyself
And others hold in readiness, whene'er
I lead, to follow. –

Oglendstein. We obey. (Exit)

Osric (alone) This triumph must Now, Fate

This triumph must thou grant me still. – He dies

240a (54)

This night, or early on the morrows morn:
But first, must feel deem her false, must feel himself
Betrayed through her. It were a sorry triumph
But o'er his body, not his soul, to thrust him
By dint of numbers from his seat. Remaineth
To crush his spirit, which hath dared encounter
The soaring soul of Osric. – Alboin:
My hate of thee is even as wild a passion
As my delight in her. What [illegible] though I call thee
Dull monk and dreamer, I do feel their lies
A royal fire within thy breast, which mine
Would meet in dire affray. Ay, thou art worthy
Even of an Osric's hatred! – Now, belike

Thou'lt strive to move the burghers to thy party:
So do: nay, even if thou in this succeed,
Thou'lt form but a more worthy [illegible] for object of my hatred. –
Once more. I'll crush thee both in soul and body,
And make thy mistress mine! – Then – may'st thou perish. –

(Exit)

Scene 2nd.

(A street in Stockholm. – Night hath fallen.)

Ingelbrau, Winnibald, Leofric, Alfgar, burghers, peasants, partisans of Osric, Alboin, enveloped in a mantle, who remains for some time in the background)

Leofric. A glorious day for Sweden!

Ingelbrau. Think you, master? –

Alfgar. The monk hath fallen. –

Winnibald. – But he was our King.

Some Citizens. Our rightful King. –

Others. No! – No! – A monk rule Sweden?–

He shall not! – Long live Osric! –

Winnibald. Ye're all rebels. –

Huzza for Alboin! –

Ingelbrau. List me, my masters.

Though he was young yet he was valiant too;

He faced his foes within the Palace bravely.

241 (55)

Citizens. He did! – He did! – All know it. –

Leofric. But, a Monk?

Other citizens. Ay, ay, no Monk to rule us! – Long live Osric!

Osric for ever, ho!

Confused cries. The worthy Prior!

The Prior of blest St Emeran! – He passes.

Alboin. (coming forward, aside) Worthy? – How weak am I! – I know full well

His guileful baseness: yet I seem to fear him. –

Such force hath custom's sway.

(Enter Prior Heribert, followed by attendant monks)

Prior. Heaven guard my children,

And guide their footsteps ever! – This indeed

Should be a night of joy and merriment;

Of peace and feasting. – One (with tears I speak it,

For I have been his ghostly father long.)

One void of all the feelings of humanity

Hath been ejected from his ~~throne~~ seat of power,

And in his stead a valiant King elected,

Who loves and will preserve his country well.

Citizens. Long live brave Osric!

Alboin. (aside) Traitor!–

Prior. Worthy friends,

Ye guess not half the sorrows ye have scaped from. –

Know, Alboin, had ta'en a solemn vow

To dedicate his life, his all, to Heaven. –

This had he broken. – Think ye that his Maker

Would not requite such breach of faith? – Believe ye,
Heaven would have blest the counsels of the man
Who sacrificed his soul to power and splendour?
Or else to love lascivious? For I learn
Such base intent was his. – Even twere he ~~even~~ free,
Unvowed, unbound, his vices would unfit him
For Sweden's throne. – Know, he was mean, yet cruel:
Full of dark lusts and fraught with evil instincts
For others' ruin: yet most wily. – Oh,

241a (56)

Around my heart he crept, like some bright serpent,
Whose glossy folds so softly ~~fold~~ cure, ye scarce
Can feel its presence, till it turned, and stings ye.
Thus stung he me, his benefactor; thus
Deserted one, who toiled to save his soul;
One, who received his vows of faith, who reared him – –

Citizens. Shame on him! Shame ! –

Alboin. (stepping forward, to the Prior). Tis false! – This vow could bind not. –

Thou know'st me, Prior, and shrinketh. Thou hast lied. –
Dar'st thou deny it? – Thou, his benefactor?
Thou, the true friend of him thou erst hath slandered? –
Twas thou did'st strive to wrap his soul in dreams
Of falsest bigotry; to image Heaven
As a dark vengeful Power, which nought could satiate;
Which nought could glut, as 'twere, with others' pain,
Save the prostration of the soul before it,
And utter resignation of all thoughts,
All feelings bright and glorious, God had granted,
To shine as starbeams on life's lonely ways. –
Thus did'st thou act: from motives false and selfish,
Seeking to raise another to the throne;
And in thy hideous purpose had'st succeeded,
Had not one man, who owned a noble soul,
Woke to free life once more thy destined victim
And gave him back himself. – Away! Away! –
Guilt is a dastard ever. Thou must feel
How thou hast wronged the love one. – Hence, I say!

Prior. (after a pause) – – I wage not war – in words. – – Farewell, my children: –
Heaven bless ye ever! –

(He passes across the stage, and departs on the right, followed by the monks.)

Alboin. – Swedes, not all was false

He told ye. Alboin, your Monarch erst
Was weak, most weak. – Poor fool! He idly trusted
That loyalty was not a bygone thing,
Not a base name and shadow: nay, he dreamt,
Vain dreamer! that True Love dwelt here on earth,

242 (57)

And even one of humble birth might feel it. –
He hath been wakened from this airy vision,
And his young heart is chilled. – Perchance, as erst

Ye learnt, he would be stern and cruel now,
 And false; since earth and heaven were false to him. –
 This may be. – Oh! Which one of ye hath felt
 The anguish of the waking from such vision,
 Who doubts that it may work dire change in Man?
 None – none. – And Alboin such change hath known. –
 No more is he the young and ardent dreamer
 Who glowed for others' good, and felt his being
 A boon, for which he owed most grateful love.
 No: this is past for ever; and earth seems
 A dreary desert, void of life or beauty,
 Through which he strays, himself a dark cold shade. –
 Yet, Sweden, was he your Monarch! nay, he is!
 Power may tread down the Right, but cannot change it,
 And Right gives him your Crown. – A band of traitors
 And foreign spies with one ambitious leader,
 Now dubbed your Lord, have cast him from his throne:–
 But noble hearts still beat for Sweden's monarch –
 Grant, he was weak! Should weakness be oppressed
 And trampled on? If so, perchance you'll find
 There is such strength in weakness, justice aiding,
 As shall bear down the strong. – Or deem ye, Swedes,
 There must in sooth be vain and trembling dastards
 Who love the stories of the Times of Old,
 And fondly dwell upon the bardic legends
 That chronicle the deeds of heroes past? –
 But, more – he was a Poet! – Aye he strove
 To feel the glow divine of inspiration
 And strike the lyre to lays of Sweden's Pride.
 Was this a crime? – A Poet! – Ay, ye dream,
 He, who could feel, may act not, he, who dreamt,
 May ne'er perform, [illegible], that action suits each
 One who hath hailed with tears high feeling's power.
 Ye err! – The Poet is not doomed or blasted
 By Hell's dark curse: he breathes, he hopes as you;

242a (58)

He acts, he loves! There is no veil around him,
~~illegible~~ Which hides him from the World, the World from him.
 There is no stamp of Cain upon his brow:
 No power controls him, which would bind him ever
 To the same dreary circle, death in life.
 The World is open all to him as you,
 And he may toil, and combat, ay, and triumph. –
 True, he too may be struck to his heart's core:
 He too may be betrayed! – But, tho' he sing not,
 Tho woe's dark chains he wound around his being,
 Ye cannot bend his spirit; and ye shall not.
 Long as he lives, he still will toil and combat,
 Will fight all singly though a world oppose.
 For moments he may waver. Ay, even now

I told ye, that the youth of whom we speak
Was warped perchance to cruelty and sternness,
By his dark fate. – I cried. I feel, he was not. –
No, still, tho' earth and heaven should join against him,
Still, tho' the friends he trusted should desert,
Still, tho' the maid he loved should love betray,
Right were not changed and Freedom were not vanished:
Still would he toil for others, for his People,
And live, in Fate's despite, to conquer Fate. –

Citizens. (confusedly) They're Traitors! – Down with Osric! With the Foes
Of Sweden! – They shall perish! –

(Enter Owain Tostedt.)

Owain Tostedt. (seeing Alboin) It is he! –

(Aside, to him) One word, my monarch. –

Alboin. Who art thou?

Owain Tostedt. The uncle

Of her who –

Alboin. Ah! – and thou the missive gaveth

Which sealed my fall!–

Owain Tostedt. Another bear I, Sire.

Alboin. Another? – What? From her? – No more.

243 (59)

Owain Tostedt. My liege –

- She loved thee only. But her fears for thee

Her .. read, I pray thee! – (Presenting the letter.)

Alboin. (reads) Ah! – She still does love me ! –

Oh joy! – She bids me to her dwelling haste,

This night, within the hour? –

Owain Tostedt. The friends who there

Would meet ~~you~~ thee, may be trusted. Hast thou still

Desire, as feel thee must, to save our Sweden,

Then, O my king –

Alboin. Enough! – I will not fail you.

Owain Tostedt. I go then of thy near approach to warn her.

And all our friends assemble.

(As he passes, aside)

Gracious Heaven! –

Turn thou this scheme to good! – Against my will

I use her love as agent. – She must fly

Forthwith, if we succeed. – Guard, Saints, my Monarch!–

(Exit)

Alboin. She is not false: she could not be! – She loves me. –

Creation smiles again. –

(To the Citizens)

My friends: now hear me!

The cloud which erst beshadowed Alboin

Hath past away, and sunlight warms his soul. –

Would you behold him?

(Casting his mantle aside.)

Lo, he stands before you. –

He stands prepared to face and meet his foes. –
Ay, I am Alboin: I am that weak one
Of whom ye heard, that dreamer dull and vain,
That dastard, who would shrink from every danger,
That monk, whose soul for months, for years, half-slumbered,
That Poet, who hath wept o'er genius' lay. –
Do ye despise me? Deem ye, I should cower
Before your mail-clad warriors, nursed to conflict?

234a (60)

Deem ye, because I feel a mind within me,
That matter must o'erpower, must chain, must blast me?–
No. let my weakness prove, then curse, then scorn me! –
Swedes, glows within ye now one noble impulse
To aid my sinking cause, give it full sway!
Your monarch prays his subjects for their love:
And ye must grant it; for ye are men, not monsters. –
By every loyal thought that urged your sires
To fealty to mine, by truth, by justice,
By Sweden, prostrate at her foemen's feet,
By Freedom, which your tyrants would wrest from ye,
Nay, more, by my love youth and seeming weakness,
Join with me now to meet your foes and mine,
And swear, even here, to serve your King and Sweden!–

Citizens. (as with one voice, tumultuously) We swear! We swear! – Long live King Alboin!

Alboin. Disperse ye now, but meet within the hour
Upon St Catherine's Square. There shall ye find me
In an old building, vast, but half in ruins,
That flanks the Royal Chapel on the right. –
There shall we others [illegible] will join your ranks. –
Away! – I feel ye are faithful!

Citizens. To the death.

Alboin. This night, perchance, shall Triumph crown our daring.
(All the citizens &c &c retire. Alboin remains alone.)

Alboin. Now, now, I feel my soul doth bound within me,
And, as a bark that crests the waves in pride,
Doth revel in the dangers that surround it. –
–My Asta, mine! – Oh, thought of bliss, of rapture! –
She was “constrained” to that most dire reply,
Which for the time did steal me from myself
And all unmanned me. – Why “constrained”? – I know not. –
But well I feel, had not that blow descended,
When least expected; to confound, half blast me,
I might have grasped Revolt's dire hydra-head

244 (61)

And seal'd its doom, ere it could spit its venom. –
But this is past. The Future's still before me.
Let me not prove unworthy of my fate!
Heaven, thou, who gav'st me strength, as will can't take it;
Confirm it mine:– in me be Sweden's bless'd! –

Scene 3rd

(Interior of Owain Tostedt's dwelling, as in Act 2nd: Scene 1st)

(Asta, alone, at the casement on the left.)

Asta. My uncle yet returned not. – Oh, vain heart!
I fear, I fear, too lightly did'st thou yield
To even his entreaties, when he bad thee
Rekindle hopes of love in Alboin, –
My Monarch! – Now, I fear, I scarce know what:
What, if my uncle comes not, stayed by Osric
And his fell band: what, if his friends prove false:
Prove spies, to snare their King?. The thought is madness. –
And I shall then have lured thee to thy fate,
My Monarch. – I, too, shall have kindled hopes
Which must prove shadows only: for I never
Oh, never, may be thine! – My love hath erred:
Thou would'st forgive me, could'st thou read ~~my~~ this heart;
Full well I know it. – But can I – can I – –
Hark! Steps without! – My uncle? –

(Enter Osric, followed by Guards, from the door without.)

Ah! – All's lost! –

Osric. (to his Guards, pointing to the Doors in the background, which lead to an Inner apartment.). Retire ye:– there within I soon shall join ye.

(The Guards withdraw)

Asta, this night, my highest goal is won:
This night, my rival falls, and thou art mine.
Dost tremble? – Ay, I know, thou little thoughtest
That thou and he were taken in the toils.
I use thee as the agent of my vengeance
On him whom I abhor. – Dost mark me, Asta?–
By my contrivance hath thy Father urged thee

244a (62)

To tempt him hither, here to meet his death. –
He deemed indeed to work the youth a service.
Now is he close–[illegible] by my behest. –
List me:– I, and my Guards, will rest within;
And when your vows of endless love are spoken,
Will rush to seize the youth; whom thou dost murder,
For even through thee he falls. –

Asta. (falling on her knees before him) – – Have pity! – Spare him! –

Osric. Rise! He is doomed, and doomed through thee. – yet, mark me:
Perchance if thou dost smile upon my suit,
His sentence may be changed to Durance stern.
If not, he does ere sunrise.

Asta. He would hate me,
Should I thus save him!

Osric. Act as best thou pleasest. –

Thou can'st not warn him; for, without you thresholds
Stand Guards even as within; hid by night's darkness,
But prompt to slay him should he seek to issue. –
Now list! If thou would'st save him. Lovely Asta,
From instant death, declare, "thou lov'st him not,
And when hast loved, save with a sister's fondness!"
Else shalt thou be his murtheress. – Every tone
Will reach me there within: nay, every gesture. –
Thou [illegible] yon casement? (Pointing to that in the background.)
Perchance Ay, [illegible] more I tell thee,
If thou persuad'st him ^{that} thou lov'st him not,
And only then, I may yet spare.

Guard. (who appears at the threshold) My liege,
Lord Alboin draws nigh. (Retires)

Osric. Tis well. – (to Asta) Remember! –
(He withdraws to the Inner Chamber)

Asta. (alone) I – I – destroy him? – Horror! – Steel my heart
High Heaven! – I must deceive him. – Ah, he comes!
(Enter Alboin)

Alboin. Asta! Thou only here? – Oh thanks, kind Heaven! –

245 (63)

Beloved one, do I meet thee thus again,
[illegible] my hopes to thee? – Let thy sweet eyes
Smile on me, let thy heart beat fast to mine,
Which pants to greet thy being. –

Asta. (who turns from him, wildly) Oh – no more! –

Alboin. No more? Fresh doubts! – hast thou again deceived?
Canst be this? Dost thou not love me, Asta?

Asta. (half fainting) Yes, as a sister.

Alboin. Only thus! –

Asta. – – Thus – – only – –

Alboin. It cannot be! – It is not possible! –
Why call me to thee then? – Oh Asta, Asta! –
Thou break'st my heart! – Let me this instant perish,
If I but knew thou lov'st me! – – And it must be! –
Thy tremor – thy convulsive (Straining her to his breast)
Mind, mine ~~alone~~ only! –

Thou shalt be mine, blest Angel! –

Asta. All is vain!
I cannot save thee; though I wrack thy soul. –
– I own – with pride, I own, thou Hell may hear me,
My heart is thine, thine ever! –

Alboin. I am bless'd! –

(Reenter Osric, followed by the Guards, from within)

Osric. Disarm him! –
(The Guards rush forward and surround Alboin,
Who sword they send away.)

Now. My Rival, thou art vanquished: –
Vanquished through her, thou lov'st!" – She hath deceived thee;
She led thee hither to thy certain fate;

She gave even now the signal for my entrance.
(Aside to Asta.) That know'st thou, true. – Deny: that instant dies he! –
Alboin. (to Asta) Art thou thus false? – Say. So! And I will bless thee. –
She speaks not. – Oh! –

245a (64)

Osr. (to Alboin.) Tis even thus. – In all
Thy fortune ~~doth~~ yields to mine, – Thy Realm I rule,
Thy heartsbeloved against her will hath loved me,
And worked thy ruin. – Wilt thou sue for mercy?–
Alboin. – Peace! – peace! –
Osr. Guards, bind him!
Alboin. (to the Guards) Tis your honored task
To bind the King of Sweden. Nought defends me,
Save Heaven, which sees your every thought, and may
Avenge!
(The noise of approaching footsteps is heard without)
And yet they come, who even on earth
Shall plead my cause. – Ye trusty Swedes, haste hither!
(Enter Oglendstein, Faroer, Nobles, Guards &c in Osr's service.)
Ha! – This hope crossed? –
Oglendstein. Osr. I hail ye, worthy vassals.
Oglendstein. My liege, a widely spread sedition toward
Hath stayed our course: but we have hushed the brawlers;
All is at peace.
Osr. I thank ye. So, secure
This rebel captive. Here was he surprised
In projects of rebellion, which himself
Can strive not to dissemble. –
Alboin. – I demand
The Combat with thee, Osr! –
Osr. Thou – the Combat?
Alboin. Even I. – Before the nobles here assembled,
Tho' not my friends, yet Swedes, this test I claim
Of thy or my just right to Sweden's sceptres. –
I am of Royal Lineage. This at least
Thou can'st deny not. Nought but weakness could

246 (65)

Debar me from my rights. – For yonder maid,
Of humble lineage, whom to love in me
Was held a crime, ~~she may~~ mine be she never! never! –
Enough. – There's nought but cowardice in thee,
(To which I know thy soul a stranger ever,)
Could now be urged as plea to stay this combat,
To bar me from my rights. The Lords here present,
Ay, all who hear me, well I know, support
My claim. – I wait thine answer.
Osr. Have thy wile!
I dreamt not thou would'st e'er occasion yield me,
To crush thee also, thus, with thine own arms. –
Well know I thou art new to strife:– for me,

I need not boast – but rumour must have taught thee,
 That Fate this ~~arm~~ frame with martial strength hath dowered –
 Which long experience – yet no more. Then askest:–
 Nor be the boon denied! – Think not of flight:
 Too well shalt thou be guarded. Few hours thence,
 Before the assembled nobles of the land,
 Even on the City's Northern Square, at sunrise,
 We twain will meet. –

Alboin. So be it!

Asta. (rushing forward) Oh, my Monarch!–
 Hear me! – I dreamt not – – –

Alboin. Prythee, speak no more :–
 Earth hast thou made to me a desert dreary –
 But now the worst is past. – If Heaven will aid –
 I may – forget thee! – Oh ! – (To Osríc) Thou hast destroyed her:
 Her soul hast blighted. – ~~Oh~~ If such cause as this
 My youthful arms may brace not – – – but, no more ! –

Asta. (aside) So all is best. – He may forget me; yes,–
Should think me guilty thus. – I thank thee, Heaven,
 He hath not heard! –

Alboin. (turning wildly to her) Yet – yet thou ask'st to speak?–

246a (66)

What is't? – Can'st thou be innocent? – No answer? – –
 Farewell for ever ! –

Osríc. Pass we from this dwelling:
 Guard well my Foe.

(Osríc, Alboin guarded. Faroer, Oglandstein &c all depart on the left.)

Asta. (who has stood, as if tranced, when all have departed)
 Thanks, Heaven! – My King! – – – Oh, anguish!
 (She faints)

The Curtain falls.

Act 5th

Scene 1st :

(Interior of Alboin's Tent, erected on the Lists of St Catherine's
 Square.)

(Alboin, alone.)

Alas! My conscience must condemn me, Yes,
 For Love, and thence, for self, I acted: thence
 The Convent left I, (though I thought of Sweden,
 I thought of Asta more;) thence, spite of all
 The good Jarl Holkar's warnings, (noble friend!)
 Did plight my faith once more to thee, sweet maiden!
 When by that act my country I betrayed. –
~~Did'st~~ Thence did I lose all courage, feel deep tranced
 In woe, when in the Council hall, unthinking,
 Thy missive I received: and thence again,
 Even yesternight, did rush into the snare
 Laid for me, urged by passion, unrestrained

By thought. – Nay, even when I demanded
The combat with my Foe, on vengeance thought I
For Asta's wrongs, more than on Sweden's ruin,

247 (67)

More than on all her serfs, who cry for Freedom. –
Thus may it be no more. – No, if I live,
If Heaven grant triumph in the approaching fight,
(As I do think it will, despite my newness
To war's assaults, and Osric's warrior skill,) –
Then ~~still~~ must we part for ever: she and I. – –
My life be henceforth dedicate to thee,
Beloved Land: to Justice! – Anguish feel I
In this resolve, more deep than tongue can tell. –
– So be it! Man was born for duty. – Soon
She hither comes to take a last farewell. –
I know she will not fail me. Cause have I
To see her once again: to crave forgiveness
For my past doubt. – Oh, midnight's lonely vigil
Hath taught me what my heart should aye have known,
That Asta must be true. – I ask not how
She so was led astray; nor care. – Enough. –
I wronged her, foully wronged her, by suspicion;
Even sanctioned by herself. – Her virgin soul
Rebukes me for the sin. – She comes. – Heaven, arm me!

Guard. (at the entrance) A female craves admittance –

Alboin. Bid her enter! –

Heaven grant me ^{but} strength for this sad duty: sweet,
Perchance in very [illegible]. –

(Guard, who has retired, reenters ushering in Asta, and then withdraws.)

Hail, dear Asta! –

Thy pardon – even at once I haste to crave it –
Thy pardon for my doubts! ~~Thee~~ I know thee true,
Though night and day conspire to prove thee faithless. –
Thy pardon! –

Asta. Oh, my Monarch, Alboin –

I cower in this dread hour – before the combat
That ends perchance – – I come – to ~~say~~ own, Love thee:

247a (68)

~~[illegible] Have loved thee ever!~~ – Oh [illegible], I could not leave thee
Uncertain of my [illegible]. –

Alboin. I was not, Asta. –

Passion awhile beguiled me: but few thoughts
On thy pure soul recalled me to the knowledge,
Thou could'st not e'er deceive. – Thou dost forgive me?

Asta. Forgive thee? I? – Oh, let me say how he,
Thy foe, wrought –

Alboin. Prythee, sweet, give o'er!
I ask not aught of yesternight. Enough.
I know thee true. – Then thou dost love me, Asta? –
Love me [~~with more than~~] [illegible] sister's love? – Alas!

Tis ~~sweet to know yet bitter~~. We must part
 For ever. – Yes, whate’er this combat’s fortune,
 We meet no more on earth. Thy self-devotion
 Hath made thee strive to veil thy fondness, Asta. –
 Thou knew’st that by the stern decrees of Sweden
 Thy Monarch ne’er could wed thee. – Oh, believe me,
 If rank and power alone were here at stake
 A thousand crowns would I for thee resign:
 But all the helpless call me, and my soul
 Commands me, save my country. – So, farewell!–
 Dear Asta, should Heaven nerve my arm, and crown me
 This morn, as Sweden’s Lord; in future years
 When thou shalt hear of me, and of my deeds,
 Think in thy far seclusion, think, my Asta, –
 I bear a [illegible] bleeding heart upon ~~thy~~ the thought throne,
 Cheered by the thought ^{alone}, that thou did’st ~~truly~~ love me. –
 Farewell! –

Asta.

Farewell –

Alboin.

Pray for me, dearest love –

No more! – (Exit Asta)

Now, earth! Thy latest tie is parted.

248 (69)

(Blast of trumpets without)

Degebert. (entering). Arm thee, my Lord! The hour is come of conflict. –

Alboin. I am prepared. – Wilt thou my armourer be
 Within?

Degebert. In that charge honoured.

Alboin. Leave with me. –

(~~They enter~~ Exeunt the Inner Compartment of the
Tent.)

Scene 2nd:

(St Catherine’s Square. – The open Lists. – Morning.)

(Martial music. – Faroer, Oglendstein, Suraborg, Leofric, appear &c take their
 Stations on the right. After them, Elmhult, Degeberg, Ingelbrau, Wunibald &c on the
 Left. – Then enter, to loud trumpet blasts, from opposed sides, Alboin and Osric
 Both in full armour, and with drawn swords. – Heralds, nobles, pages, buglers &c
 Herald, (who stands in the centre of the lists) Osric of Gurilliedstern! Why com’st
 Thou hither?)

Osric. (on the R) I come to claim the Crown of Sweden mine,
 Conferred on me by Sweden’s finest and noblest:
 And this, my right will I to death maintain
 On all who dare oppose me. – So, my answer. –

Herald. What seek’st thou, Alboin, within these lists?

Alboin (on the L) [illegible] to wage with him who would defraud me
 Of my proud heritage, the Crown of Sweden,
 And on the weakest of my subjects trample. –
 Him will I smite, or fall myself his prey.

Herald. Then may Heaven judge the right! – When thrice yon trumpets

~~Have with their brazen signals woke the air,
Commence the warlike combat, and, fight boldly!—~~

~~(The Trumpets sound.)~~

~~(The combatants advance and face one another.)~~

Osric. Youth, thou hast drawn thy fate upon thyself:
~~Perchance I might have spared thee.~~

Alboin. Peace.— This Ordeal

248a (70)

Claims issue, not as force alone, and skill,
Might furnish, but, as Heaven shall judge. If, Osric,
Thy conscience of base perfidy can quit thee,
If thou with honour meeteth me, if the Right
Be thine— then, may'st thou conquer!

~~(Second Flourish of Trumpets.)~~

Osric. — Had I a worthier Foe! —

Alboin. Disguise not thus
Thy doubts:— thou hast more worthy foes than I;
Angels, perchance, who guide my weapon's point,
And add unto the strength, which Heaven hath granted
Even from my birth, a skill in arms, like thine,
Or greater.

Osric. [illegible] the Event decide!—

Alboin. So be it! —

~~(Third Blast of Trumpets.)~~

Herald. Reveille! —

Osric. For my honour and for Sweden!

Alboin. For Sweden, I and Heaven! —

~~(They fight. Alboin disarms Osric, and hurls him backward in the dust.)~~

Alboin. Bear him away! — The God of Battles here
Hath judged my cause. In durance let him lie,
Yet kindly tended, till our counsellors
Proclaim his sentence!
~~(Osric is born away.)~~

Tumultuous Cries. King of Sweden, hail! —

Hail, Alboin, our Monarch! —

Alboin. Well loved subjects,

The past be all forgotten: none shall suffer

For what was done till now 'gainst me or mine. —

~~Cries renewed. Long live King Alboin!~~

249 (71)

Cries. — Osric hath fallen! — — Hail, O King of Sweden! —
Hail Alboin!

Alboin. (to the Nobles, Squires &c) See, if he breathe: — use means
To give him life again.

~~(They obey.)~~

Degeberg. He doth revive. —

Faroer. Though stunned, he soon will rear him from this slumber:
Yet is his right arm shattered! Loosely hangs it.

Elmhult. Perchance he ne'er could face another fray.

Alboin. The God of Battles judged our cause. To him

Alone ascribe the issue! – Conscience nerved
My heart, and shook the foe. –

Crowd. – He rises slowly! –

He gazes round him – see!

Alboin. (stepping to him) Unhappy Knight,
Thy life, I fear, is forfeit unto Justice. –
All charge thee with the murder of thy King,
Of both my Royal Cousins. – Prov'st thou guiltless,
I will with joy forgive thy wrongs to me. –
Yet now, before I send thee to that durance
Which Duty bids impose, I would entreat thee,
(For much of noble marked I in thy words,
Of resolute, of proud, befitting one
Of lofty soul, though erring;) therefore say I,
I would entreat thee, to recall thy Past
And think on all has chanced 'twixt thee and me. –
Err I not greatly, thou for boundless Power
For sway Imperial thus hast sinned. So urged,
Sought'st thou to crush the young and friendless orphan,
(Yet friendless not: brave Jarl, forgive the word!)
To stamp him as a soulless monkish dreamer
With scorn and infamy. – I do not seek
To triumph o'er thee now: to boast a conquest

249a (72)

Which Heaven alone bestowed and thy conviction
Of thy ill cause. But even this, thy fall,
Sprung from thy self-arraignment, argues thee
Not deaf to honor's call: and therefore say I,
Thou had'st too much of Noble in thy nature
To warrant such desertion of the Right,
Such sacrifice of loyal faith to Empire. –
Of, what is sway, though o'er a myriad worlds,
Attained by wrong, to shieldless virtue, banished,
Degraded, ay, or trampled on? – My Foe –
A worthy foe wast thou in force and valour –
No pardon proffer I save justice' sentence
To bribe thee to repentance for the past. –
Think not, repentance shames: none rise so high
As those who thus their baser selves subdue
And soar triumphant. – Think on what is spoken. –
I woo thee not to open penance here:–
But it doth would my soul to see one bless'd
By Heaven with choicest gifts, who might have proved
His King's Protector and his country's Tower
Of Refuge, false to both. – I crave no answer. –
Yet, if thou wilt, speak freely and revile me!
For this I wreak not vengeance.

Osric. (after a pause.) Alboin –
Or King! – I own thee King – (thy arm and soul
Have raised thee to thy rightful post above me,–)

I will not prate of penitence: yet show thee,
I too am not all-fallen. – I confess
Of my free will, what none might else establish,
Thy cousins through my act did die. – I ask
No need but death, nor wish. – I feel, – perchance
Thy words are true, and even Imperial Sway
As worth not loss of Honor. Yet the past

250 (73)

Is part: nought now remains than to endure,
As ~~best~~ best befits, its penalty. – Farewell! –
Thy soul indeed hath vanquished mine, hath gained,
From its own source, within thy convent-cell,
(Strange miracle!!_ true knowledge of the Glorious;
To which I yield, despower'd.

Alboin. Farwell, Lord Osric.

I thank thee for those words. – The Past
Is past in sooth: and thou must die! – Yet even
In death, this knowledge bear: thy Monarch mourns
Ay, deeply mourns thy loss, and to restore thee
Thy forfeit innocence, – – No more! – Farwell! –
Lead, sirs, your Prisoner hence! –

(Osric departs, guarded.)

Cries tumultuous. Hail King of Sweden!

Hail, our most noble Monarch!

Alboin. Well-loved subjects,

The past be all forgotten: none shall suffer
For what was done till now, 'gainst me or mine. –

Cries renewed. Long live King Alboin!

Alboin. Now speak I, friends,

On yet more weighty cause! – – Why stand I here
As conquerer, by Heaven's Grace? – To guard the weakones. –
Such be henceforth my duty! – On this morn
I would the vantage of the hour employ
For a most solemn task: the abolition
Of all unwilling servitude!

Some Nobles. (confusedly) My Liege – –

Alboin. No more! – I am not to be trifled with:
And he who first presumes to cheek my speech
Shall ~~forthwith rue his folly~~. Face yet worse than Osric. – Liberty
Is the first right of Man; and all may claim it.
It is the morning star that ushers in

250a (74)

The sun of Joy and Glory. I would break
Those chains that part the bondsman from the free. –
All service spring from love! Or else, tis cursed
In cause and consequence. No state can thrive,
Can truly thrive, in morals or in greatness,
Which sanctions slavery. – Now Millions look
To me: I speak the word, their Freedom! – Vassalage
Exists no more in Sweden. – – Think not, therefore,

No loving duty owed by herd to noble;–
 The bond of love should these unite; yet order
 Demands gradation of nobility. –
 In soul, be noble all: but render aye
 The dues of honor, as high Heaven commands ye. –
 Lawless Equality be scorned by all
 And Freedom claimed by all! – Your King hath spoken. –
 My Lords, upon the Good alone, depends
 The happy issue of this sentence. Prove ye
 Your country's Sons indeed!

General cries. Live Alboin!

Our King! for ever! –

Nobles. Sire, thy will be done! –

Degeberg. Pass we in deputation to his feet,
 Lords, Citizens and Peasants!

Cries. Ay: so be it!

(General Exclamations of Joy. The three ~~classes~~ orders defile to
 Martial music.)

Alboin. (aside) Rejoice ye! – I alone am wretched. – Heaven
 Forgive me: – mourn I must while life is left. –
 Hope is not, Asta! Should I claim thee now
 All done ~~with~~ would seem for less. – I am most wretched.

(The peasants approach, and pause before Alboin, who remains on the centre
 Left of the foreground, half-tranced in grief.)

251 (75)

Ingebrau. We first, tho' least, approach, O Lord King, to thank thee.
 We promise as our guerdon for thy favour
 Not roughly to reject our pristine chains,
 But peacefully disuse them, yielding still
 All loyal service to our Lords.

Alboin. (with an effort) Thanks, children. –
 (He waves his hand. They move on.)

(The Deputation of the Burgher Classes approaches &c)

Wunibald. We swear allegiance faithful to thy Throne,
 Against the World whenever called to guard thee.

Alboin. (as above.) Good friends, I thank ye.
 (They pass.)

(The deputation of the nobles approaches. Amongst them, Faroer,
 Oglendstein, Suraborg, Degeberg, Elmhult &c.)

Faroer. I, erst thy Foe, speak, Sire, in all our names. –
 Thy kindly sympathy for others' woes,
 Thy generous fire; a kindred ardour now
 Hath kindled in our breasts. We are content,
 (Since thou the claims of order still maintainest
 Which class to class doth bind,) that vassalage
 Henceforth in Sweden be not! – Nay, my Liege, –
 Pardon my seeming daring: but I speak
 The mouth-piece of a host; – we would implore thee
 To share they Nation's joy, and seal this work–
 By wedding one from [illegible] a humble class

The maid, in sooth, thou lov'st!

Alboin. This – this – demand ye!–

Doth not my heart deceive me? – May I truly
Receive this bliss mine own? –

Suraborg. Believe us, Sire!

All ~~vassals~~ demand thy happiness, – I crave
Forgiveness for my folly.

Alboin. Be my friend!

I ask not more. – – Oh Asta! Wert thou nigh!

Owain Tostedt. (leading Asta forward) Behold her at thy feet! –

Alboin. (raising and embracing her) Oh joy, too great
For utterance!

Faroer. Sound, ye Trumpets!– Sound in Triumph!

Loud cries. Live Alboin! Live Asta! Live, Blest Twain! –
(Loud Trumpet–blasts.)

(Pause.),

Alboin. The World may praise me for the deeds perchance
Of these few hours, and wonder that a Convent
Should work such proclivity of zeal. Thou, Asta,
Thou, at whose side my childhood's days I past,
Nursed by our Sweden's Legends of the Brave
Wilt wonder not: thou know'st how steeped was I
At early age, in that preserving fountain
Of Ancient Chivalry. My deeds were but
The memories of those lays: save one, forsooth,
Of which the World will think not; thy Resignment! –
This Conquest over self alone assures me
I have not wholly erred. – Thou, best beloved,
My Country gives thee freely to my arms;
And Love and Honor meet. – I clasp thee closely.
Oh, this is more than guerdon for my weakness! –
Kind Heaven, dear Sweden, deep the debt I owe:
So may a Life of Royal Love repay ye!–

(Curtain falls)

Finis.